BREAD and FIRE

CHARLES RUMFORD WALKER

'As for the earth, out of it cometh bread:
and under it is turned up as it were fire.'

THE BOOK OF JOB

BREAD AND FIRE

A Novel

BY

CHARLES RUMFORD WALKER

Author of 'Steel'

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1927

COPYRIGHT, 1927, BY CHARLES R. WALKER

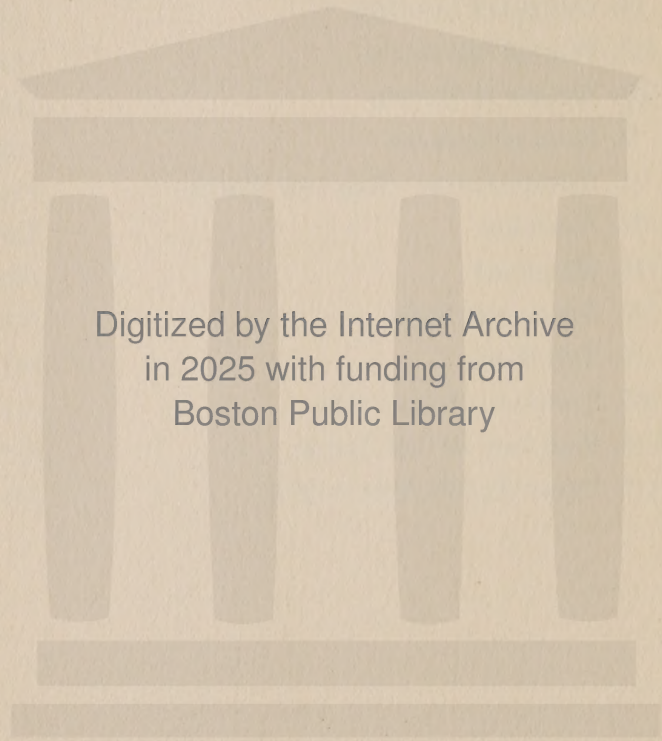
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

TO
PHELPS PUTNAM

CONTENTS

I.	Family Eucharist Upon Chaos	1
II.	Curiosity Leading	23
III.	Planet Remelted	51
IV.	Women in Utopia	74
V.	Love is Enough	94
VI.	Revolutions — Red and White	114
VII.	Ambition	141
VIII.	Machines	169
IX.	Bread and Fire	204
X.	The Duel	241
XI.	Stagnant Revolution	257
XII.	Fire Out of the Earth	277
XIII.	Dirty Reed's Apocalypse	296


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Boston Public Library

https://archive.org/details/breadfirenovel00walk

BREAD AND FIRE

CHAPTER I

FAMILY EUCHARIST UPON CHAOS

QUIET, friendly New England Upham. I had come back to see my cousin married, and in the midst of that happiness surrendered to all the pleasantness about — as it beamed out of the bride's eyes, shone on the faces of aunts, and vibrated deeply in the organ music. I absorbed the united effervescence of two extensive families through the pores of my wedding-day skin, and grinned. At the age of six I had made love to the bride, and liked her ever after; I had played with the groom in my childhood, and gone to a Plattsburg camp with him.

The two families were native to Upham and had known each other for generations. They were now positively exuberant, as dynastic groups are on such occasions when young people break the rules and do the hoped-for thing. The wedding meant a great deal. It was a little as if the two clans — in the wider sense of outlying cousins — had gathered together for the rite of Holy Communion

with the spirit of the Family. It was like a college reunion, a general convention — and a directors' meeting.

I remember gulping a little when my father's coachman, who had been an invalid for several years, got himself into a black coat and top hat and put our one remaining horse into a carryall to transport guests from the church to the bride's house. He sat straight, pale, and happy.

In church I looked at people through a glow, doubtless more of a glow than the bride's, who was a practical soul, and was tired through an unforgivable excess of send-off teas. Over the serried ranks of family, arranged very carefully in pews on the right and on the left, I looked. There was good stuff in them. They gave me an extraordinary sense of cheerful capacity and perpetuity. And against this background of respectability, prosperity and custom was youth and love; religion stepping in to sanctify life at its brightest and most passionate moment; the promise of a future built on the rocks of love and tradition perfectly fused, and of a new birth of these listed securities for unnumbered generations.

Only once did my thoughts spring out of the church and the rite I was so intensely enjoying. When they did, they sprang clean out. By that I mean they sprang over the top of the Episcopal

marriage service, over the top of the two united families, over the walls of quiet Upham, over the borders of agricultural and still colonial New Hampshire. They sprang to Pennsylvania, and then raced around the world twice.

The way it happened was this. I turned — I twisted rather — to see who sat back of Aunt Carrie in the left rear pews; and the sleeve of my cutaway, sticking close to the sleeve of my wedding shirt, moved across my right elbow. A twinge of pain caused me to lose interest for a moment in the left rear pews, and when I turned back to face the minister, I had forgotten all about Aunt Carrie.

There was a tender, flaming spot of skin almost on the end of my crazy bone, caused by a burning cinder which had flown out of a steel furnace three days before. The furnace was in a Pennsylvania town where I had been engaged in learning the steel business 'from the bottom up.' When, in turning my eyes toward Aunt Carrie, I drew a stiff white shirt across that tender elbow, I naturally thought of Pennsylvania, and how at this moment, while the story of the marriage at Cana was being read out of a large book reposing on the spread wings of a golden eagle, gangs of men were working on furnaces, rolling mills, soaking pits, blast furnaces, and on all the other battle-grounds of steel manufacture. And about a hundred thousand, at this minute, were out

on strike; they were loafing at home, or in jail, or disputing angrily in the streets with the Pennsylvania State Police (mounted). I thought of all this vividly, because I had just come from it, and because steel had been my profession since I resigned from the Army.

The disorderly array of those images cut raggedly across the interior of Saint Paul's Church, where the choir was now singing the hymn we had picked out for them — and which they had tried out before the immediate family yesterday afternoon. As boy voices sang, with what seemed to me unbelievable beauty, and the sun came through the red and gold of chancel windows upon their faces, my Pennsylvania thoughts became unreal and then vanished utterly in the presence of this reassuring, this inevitable, this eternal rite . . .

On the lawn after the reception, the bride's father, although a trifle bored with the crowd, a trifle nervous and a trifle weary, was clothed with pride as he should have been. The photographs were taken, the couple made no attempt to send off one automobile violently and conspicuously, as a decoy, and race away by a back street in a jitney. They left very visibly and audibly in their own car, which meant that they jangled off with an orchestra of tin cans tied to the rear axle by the more orthodox and violent of the Southern cousins.

Providence, New London, New Haven, and New York. The narcotic atmosphere of the smoking-car soothes some travelers into sleep; moves others into games of chance . . .

But I found an unoccupied seat, and undertook no palpable activity for an hour and a half. When the cinders had sifted into a little pile on the window-sill and then at the turns shook over on my knee, I moved to the aisle side of the seat. But that was all. I had previously planned to save and protect this hour from interruption. For two reasons: the first for thinking back upon the gleam, thrill, and beauty of the wedding; the second for reviewing the whole magnificent vision of my own future.

The world was sorry — but new; tumbling down, but beneath burned curious and exciting flames. I had gone to work in a Bethlehem steel mill because a buddy of mine had talked steel at me all the way from France on a fourteen-day naval transport. He had fired my mechanical imagination upon it, and I had gone to work to learn how sixteen-inch guns were forged in America. But starting as a hot-blast man, I never progressed beyond the open-hearth. The naked fury of molten steel poured into ladles from the open-hearth had burned both my flesh and my imagination. Then came the great steel strike, and when every one from the firemen to 'clean-ups' walked out exultant in the name of human freedom,

I left as well, throwing my canvas cap with two burns in the crown over the mill gate. I had no job, and was mildly pleased by that condition. The curiosity about sixteen-inch naval guns had melted in the furnace flame and been displaced by other curiosities, which I felt could be explored better in New York than in Bethlehem. I was twenty-four years old, and I hesitated between becoming a labor leader, a great playwright, or an editor.

Looking very intently at the poker game across the aisle, and seeing none of it, I decided that for the present, considering both the healthy but unfocused state of my curiosity and the need for bread and shelter — I refused scornfully any subsidy from parents — I would go back to my pre-War trade — or is it a profession? — and become, God willing, a reporter — in a little while an editor — of a 'great metropolitan daily.' For a few minutes, I read carefully the editorials in the 'New York World,' and then counted over in my lap, with due pride, the $178 which was the accumulation of one year and a half in the Army and six months as a Bethlehem furnace helper.

Upon the same afternoon that I reached New York, I went about, inquiring for cheap neighborhoods, with my mind divided between the economics of plain living and the chances of a great play,

Greek-American, built on the steel industry. It would be written round a molten-bright furnace — august but quite ghastly — done on the line of the Orestes. No Broadway producer would touch it. So I came, after a while, to West Twenty-Third Street. At Seventh and Twenty-Third, the trucks and taxi-cabs, with a policeman and three 'foreigners' crossing the street between the elevated stanchions, made a pleasant whirlpool for a minute, and then a jam. I hadn't enjoyed New York so since before the War. The people were all electric, it seemed to me; tired, with their nerves visible, but frantically alive. Their electricity came into me, and I wasn't tired, but very fit, with hard muscles, and the gorgeous substance of dreams in my head.

Even the swollen-tanked Socony trucks jammering heavily on the cobblestones I regarded with pleasure. A heavy, ruthless industry, American and new. The trucks were painted a bright green.

Crossing the street, I jumped away from a throaty honk and the mud-guard of a Checker cab scraped my trouser leg. I moved along Twenty-Third Street toward Ninth Avenue, and the traffic thinned. Leaving Eighth, I entered an architectural area breathing New York of the nineties and a little bewildered at the new century, but a New York that afforded greater reserve, more leisure, and more land. Four-story brick houses, with wooden trim-

mings and steps, looked over at the trucks passing on Twenty-Third Street, looked almost sleepily across unkempt yards of dirt and weeds that had once been neat and honorable as lawns. The newest of Americans had come to live in this middle-aged New York, for across the street was a regiment of immigrant hotels. I looked over and found delegates from nearly all the Balkan tribes, sitting in rows on the steps of a labor exchange. Then I felt poignantly an immigrant myself, excited and hopeful like any other. An immigrant in a country which perennially is *another country*, bafflingly and perpetually *new*.

I paused before a lot that had no gate at all, straggling high grass in the yard and the air of looking forth resignedly upon the age and the traffic which was passing it by. The brick of the house was slightly smoked, and a window-pane or two stuffed with bluish pajamas. The trimmings of the house had been painted a dark red and had blistered exuberantly. I noticed that the lower step was collapsing and admitted three blades of grass through a hole.

I climbed up and rang the doorbell, but nothing happened for minutes, save faint tinkles in some great and sub-earthly chamber. I decided to look for a cellar door. Three feet below ground, leading

from a stone-paved depression, was an iron gate, shoulder-high, of vertical bars, and above it a human head shaped like an apple, with questioning eyes in a soft and puzzled face. On seeing me, the eyes in the face dropped, the gate was unbarred, and the soft face carried above pudgy shoulders moved up into the lawn of long grass, smiling at me with a gentle intimacy.

'I thought you rang the front doorbell,' said the man, in the manner of having detected me at my old tricks again. 'The water collects here,' he continued, looking down into the cellar entrance, where a pool an inch deep lay on the stone paving. 'But it *never* gets into the cellar. That's the funny thing.'

I suddenly felt impotent to make any inquiry, but my companion showed no impatience.

'Curious old tumbledowns,' he said, looking up at the house, and sticking his thumbs in his suspenders. I noticed at once how vast his trousers were. Quite shapeless in the lower leg, they came far up his middle and fitted snugly about the lower ribs of his chest. His eyes were a wonderfully clear blue, his face creased with fat, and his mouth rather ridiculously wistful. There was only one tuft of hair on his head, well back from his eyes, in the center. This floated back and forth over his forehead, and gave him an exaggerated impression of disorder.

'I'm looking for a room,' I said, with a strong

sense of approaching a subject at a time thoroughly inappropriate. 'I noticed the sign.'

The little man's smile revealed a complete acquaintance with my thoughts. 'I was afraid so,' he said. 'I'll have nothing to offer you before next week.'

Then, in the manner of a conspirator, he whispered, 'How much do you want to pay?'

'Three dollars,' I answered secretly.

He stood lost in thought, staring at the blades of grass that grew through the doorstep.

'I could let you have a front room on the fifth floor for three dollars by the middle of the week, now taken by an ointment salesman,' said he. 'Meantime I could give you a bed.'

'A bed?' said I.

He led the way underground.

'There is not the privacy of your own room, but I have curtains around it on a little trolley. It would serve as a *modus vivendi*,' he ended pleasantly. I thought he pronounced the Latin with a French accent.

In the cellar twilight, in line with his index finger, I made out a vast four-posted bed, partly concealed at one corner by curtains printed over with a flowered pattern. A sink at a distant wall held pots and a disarray of dishes. Above it ran two shelves of books.

I remained silent.

'The bed belonged to an English ancestor of mine,' said the little man. 'My mother's people were all French. It's a pity that one of the front legs is lost, but a great many people have been comfortable here. The last was a plumber's apprentice, and the one before a medical student. The second son of the King of Bulgaria slept in this bed for six months.'

I began to laugh.

The other laughed a little too, but with no loss of dignity. 'He was living very quietly in America,' the little man explained, 'unknown to any one. It is a comfortable bed.'

'What was he doing?' I asked.

'Measuring heads,' my host returned. 'He is an ethnologist, and was interested in the effect of the climate on the shape of Europeans. We are within a stone's throw of the Greek and Bulgarian hotels, a pest-house of immigrant diseases. But I suppose he found it a convenient spot.'

'Did he measure the heads in here?' I asked uncertainly.

The little man skipped the question. 'What is your name?' he asked.

'Harris Burnham.'

'I could let you have the bed for two dollars,' he answered.

I was assaulted by sink odors, and turned away.

But whether it was the prestige of the King, the comfort of the bed — or the peculiar eloquence of Mr. Henry — I got his name at last — I stopped breathing momentarily and hired the bed.

'You won't mind Mr. Haviland,' my host said at once. 'He comes in three or four nights a week and sleeps on the couch, but he is very gentlemanly.'

I looked about for the couch, and found it directly at my back in the corner opposite the bookish sink.

'Austin!' cried Mr. Henry; and then, after a moment's doubt, 'He is always stirring by ten o'clock.'

I sat down at a table, on which Henry had lighted an oil lamp, and studied letters of introduction to the editors of four newspapers. Twice I read them through with perfect satisfaction, and then imagined how I would sell myself, with a flavor of boldness and modesty, to the most radical. Sitting thus at the table — and knocking on sanctum doors in imagination — I heard the couch creak, and looked over at Mr. Haviland. He was sitting with blankets around his waist, and his body leaning on two arms thrust prop-wise behind him. A white silk night-suit with a scarlet border covered and defined his chest.

'Ugghrr,' came out of his mouth. He scratched a thatch-fence of hair that divided his head in two, and stared with bewilderment — if it be possible, with a fierce and defiant bewilderment — at me.

'Would you mind,' he asked, dropping back on his elbows, 'giving me one of those cigarettes?'

I took up the box, and Mr. Henry turned from the sink where he had been poking globules of food down the drain.

'Mr. Haviland, Mr. Burnham,' he said.

The newly awakened man smiled foolishly behind his scarlet borders and shook hands with a crunch of knuckles.

'How will you have your eggs, Mr. Haviland?'

'Henry starts the morning,' said the man in bed, 'by calling me *Mister* Haviland. Very formal. After lunch it's Austin. After dinner, Dan. Ain't it the truth, booze-hoister?' He raised himself to shoot his voice out at Henry. I am not sure at this minute whether Henry was the man's first or last name. It seemed to serve well enough for either.

'How do you want your eggs?'

'Another thing,' continued Haviland, 'is that I don't eat eggs. My breakfast is coffee. It is one of Henry's ideas that I *ought* to eat eggs, because I used to be a football player.'

He climbed out of bed and sat in his creamy night-wear on the bedside. The silk clung to firm muscles about his shoulders.

'Where did you play football?' I asked.

'Princeton,' he said sulkily, looking as if he were going to drop out of the conversation and return to

the sheets. Then, falling backward and cross-wise on the bed, with both hands to heaven he shouted:

'Left half-back, drop kick fifty-five yards, winning Yale game, chairman of the Princeton Prom, and a goddam social success!'

'Sit down, Austin, and drink your coffee,' said Henry, putting a cup and two boiled eggs beside the lamp.

'This is chicory,' groaned the newly awakened man, slowly spilling coffee on his pajamas. 'Like all Frenchmen, Henry thinks only of the franc.'

'Austin will one day be a great man,' said Henry solemnly.

'President of a tin-can corporation. That is literally Henry's idea of my future. Funny you're so material, Henry, since you were born noble, and have lived noble. Henry is the thirty-fifth descendant, without benefit of clergy, from the Bourbons, and he has been a disinterested student of the trapeze all his life.'

'A disinterested student?' I faltered.

'At the Hippodrome. Philosophic study of the flying rings — perfectly disinterested all his life. You tell him, Henry. They paid you nothing and you stuck to the histrionic art of pretending to be a ring artist for thirty-five years. What do you do?' he asked.

'Journalist.'

'Where did Henry find you?'

'I found him.'

'Did he persuade you to sleep in that bed?'

'Yes.'

'It's all right,' Haviland went on, 'but the reason the Prince of Bulgaria slept there, honoring it and raising the price from a dollar and a half to two dollars is because I wanted this one.'

Haviland finished his eggs and dressed very quickly, putting on gray trousers, greasy and barreled, and a golf coat cut out of Scotch mist. He sat down at the lamp and stated that he wrote every morning for two hours. We were ready to talk after that. I found later the ritual went on day after day. Haviland arose — on his elbows — at ten, and baited Henry throughout his coffee and eggs. He always ate them. And then he dressed, putting on the same trousers and the same golf coat as a kind of 'morning suit.' Having announced his practice of writing daily for two hours, his conscience was cleared, and the serious pleasure of the day could begin. He would talk at me, or roam about the kitchen, or make up his face with paints, chiefly in the image of Rostand's Cyrano. He had immense histrionic ambitions and was taking a tiny part at the time in an over-sexed comedy. Upon that first morning, we discovered that we both considered Herman Melville the greatest of all prose writers.

'The whole secret of the sea,' he whispered, between his teeth. 'Whale meat and salt mysticism. Melville! What a guy he is, what a guy!'

And a few minutes later, it transpired that we held Dostoievsky in a common fever of admiration. Suddenly, crouching over his big chest and clawing the air as if he were rooting his idea out of it, he said: 'America's got the kale, the brains, the blood, by God, to be an Italian Renaissance. But she hasn't the guts! . . . I'm afraid we shall never be cruel, or incestuous, or corrupt — or *mad*,' he added wearily, sinking back in the bed.

I went out to interview my editors, promising to be back for lunch. One was out, the other two offered nothing whatever. As I walked back, I felt happy thinking of Henry cooking something on the gas stove; and Haviland, swearing softly over the fatal virtues of America.

We sat down to a lunch which Henry had prepared at a cost, he told us, of exactly nineteen cents apiece. It consisted of a cheese soufflé, a little heavy but thereby the more filling, an artichoke apiece, with melted butter, bread unlimited, and tea. It was very pleasant to sit there in the kitchen, even though we required an oil lamp at noon, to think about the future and listen to Henry attributing the philistinism of America to Predestination and the lack of per-

sonal marketing. The history and past of Daniel Austin Haviland rounded out in our talk, and I found myself extemporizing philosophies as fast as he. I thought this out. Haviland belongs to that genus of post-War American who combines violent disillusionment over the values of life with an infinite appetite for them all.

'You believe in science?' he asked suddenly.

'What do you mean?'

'It has become so much more than religion. I could be a Catholic,' he said, 'but never a Scientist. Cheap, vulgar, new national, and probably untrue. But I believe in nothing. I went all through it from the Holy Communion to Samuel Butler. You have no idea what a kick I got when I first found out the world hadn't any purpose or meaning whatsoever. I was walking in a field in the late fall with rotting dead leaves blown about in it. I sat down on a pile of them, and laughed like a kid for sheer happiness. Nothing ever cleared things up so like that idea. A load of bunk blew away from me like the rotten leaves I had been sitting on. From then on I've got a great kick watching the *pageant* of *illusion:* immortality, God, freedom, marriage, friendship, and immorality. I take care to taste all the illusions myself, but I don't kid my head. I believe in my own sensations which keep me happy, and in acting.'

At this moment, Henry was called upstairs by the

complaint of a tenant whose ceiling had fallen down on his bed, and the incident broke the thread of philosophy. Haviland and I washed the dishes in silence, till he remarked in a panic that it was by then a half-hour past his time of rehearsal. He flew out, but not until he had put on a new tie and wiped his shoes with the severed leg of a pajama. I finished the dishes alone.

For several days, spending my nights in the kitchen with Henry and Haviland, I spent my days talking about my merits to editors, or simply waiting outside their doors while they talked endlessly to people who had better appointments than mine. I found that my experience was, perversely, too great or too little for the sort of place that was empty. They'd have taken an office boy, an unapprenticed clerk, or even a cub reporter, whom they could mould freshly to their policy — and they'd have taken a night editor with ten years' experience. But for a copy-reader, which I had been, or straight reporter, New York had no vacancy. I would come home saddened every night, with my morale trampled out of me, and get it up again over a pot of Henry's tea and the latest woman in Austin's life.

The somewhat damp, twilight area of Henry's kitchen — which I found had battered furniture and unspeakable mattresses stored in its two darkest corners — proved to be a warm, glamorous, spiritual

dugout from which to assault the world. More and more, Henry (who, I learned, had bought the wistful old house out of his earnings as a Hippodrome artist) manifested what Austin called 'his goddam mixture of Bourbon and Kiwani.' He loved art, and manners; but he worshiped money under any incarnation. Austin insulted him daily for it. Whether he was an illegitimate offshoot of French royalty or no, he had an unfaltering instinct for food, the theater and gentlemen. His conversation on any subject was childish; his French history, to take one example, an amiable mythology; but his knowledge of theatrical personality was intimate, accurate, and encyclopædic. And he could detect the economic status of any man or woman with uncanny certitude.

I would have been happy except that I was restless to plunge into the world, *all over*, and look about underneath to see what it was like. Besides, I needed money. Only $79 out of my $178 was left.

One Sunday evening I borrowed some change from Austin to buy Henry's groceries. I mentioned that my Bethlehem savings had melted surprisingly, and that led us to talking about steel and eventually — a magnificent subject at twenty-four — the future. There is no better way to discover the push of your own mind than getting close to the center of another's. And when Austin talked about himself,

which was often, I got a clearer and clearer vision of my own soul.

He began that evening by tearing up the 'part' he had brought home to learn, and saying it was a show so rotten he intended leaving it the next day. He moved the pieces round with his feet, looked at me angrily, and said:

'Why in hell did you go to work in a steel mill?'

'To learn the business,' I answered.

'What else?' he asked with tremendous impatience.

'Curiosity,' I answered.

'About what?'

'Sixteen-inch naval guns.'

He looked at me malevolently while he lit a cigarette.

'I was in the Artillery during the War,' I said, 'and nutty about guns. So a buddy of mine got me a job in Bethlehem. But I got going on furnaces —'

'You didn't learn guns?'

'No,' I answered. 'I learned a little about metallurgy, strikes, spies, and Wops. Oh, and I learned the Croatian language.'

'Croatian?'

'A young pit worker taught me the words with a piece of chalk on the back of a shovel. We were working as "clean-ups"' — I stopped because my memories were too thick. Little fires in a dozen corners of my brain began to crackle, and make my head ache.

'You were there when the steel strike broke?' said Haviland, the lobes of his nostrils just beginning to tremble a little.

'Yes. I was on the open-hearth furnace, working third helper on No. 7. Of course, we knew it was coming. One man threw his shovel into the furnace, and the molten steel splashed out on his boots. . . . Eight thousand strikers left the mills. And three men broke their legs in the crush at the gate. . . . It was like Armistice Day.'

Haviland was sitting with his head held tensely in his hands, his fingers spread. 'God, I envy you!' he said. 'Will there be a revolution?'

'No,' I answered. 'There won't. At least not what you would call a revolution. . . .' For a minute or two I thought back intensely over my time in steel, which, starting from my desire to know sixteen-inch naval guns, had ended in throwing my hat with two burns in the crown over the mill gate in the 'great strike.' Flashes of those months came to me like a movie plot: the look of the inside of the chem. lab. with chunks of magnificent tool steel about, a pond of cooling lava in the open-hearth mill when No. 7 furnace burst, myself falling asleep on Main Street after a twenty-four-hour shift. Then my memory surrendered, and it was my imagination. Curious secret forces are getting at the molecular structure of industry and changing it to — God, it

would be interesting to know what! Then memory assaulted me with faces and words moving in to make my heart stop. Like Joe's Polish face, with its high hollows in the glare of steel light behind No. 7 furnace, saying, 'Let Gary work his goddam twelve-hour shift. I go drunk t'ree week.' Or the look of the woman's eyes whose husband fell into a steel ladle and was melted down a year later — they didn't tell her, but she found out afterwards — into an ingot.

I became conscious suddenly that Haviland was speaking. He had been for some minutes, but he was bringing his ideas to a climax now, which meant that he stood, crouching a little, and making the one gesture that was characteristic of him — clawing his crucial ideas from the air with bent fingers:

'. . . now if we have a revolution, all right; that's one thing. I think it would be great. Furnaces and coal mines blowing up. God, Burnham!' He smiled again and showed his teeth. 'We knocked out Germany's teeth; we'll knock out Europe's. Then we can thumb our nose at the goddam world, can't we? We ought to be set, to produce a little drama — *What?*'

I turned, and looked back quickly at my world and then over at Haviland's.

'It'll be fun watching it,' he continued, his voice trembling.

CHAPTER II

CURIOSITY LEADING

A FEW weeks after my conversation with Haviland, the newspapers contained a great deal of disquieting news about the whole world. I read it at a breakfast of fried eggs, coffee, and bread, which Henry insisted on getting without help. Haviland was asleep.

It had been proved, the newspapers said, that the steel strike was led by Communists, receiving instructions from Moscow. Extracts were printed from a revolutionary book by W. Z. Foster, who was the arch-conspirator. Revolutions abroad were reported in Berlin and Vienna, and, for the last city, the number of starving children was set down. An editorial on India surmised that the crumbling British Empire might still continue for a year or two, a kind of posthumous ghost before its final dissolution.

I found myself reading these items in great excitement, to the neglect of my eggs and Henry's morning conversation. Years of war had bred the habit of absorbing the daily press as though it contained personal ultimatums of life and death, as it frequently did. The Armistice had sealed the epoch of

strategic French towns gained and lost, of salients and spring drives, of all the real and doctored news of the four years' slaughter. Instead, it had opened up a new era, of young nations carved from the ribs of old, of dead dynasties, a League of Nations, revolution, famine and unrest. I had taken over into the new period that heady expectation and historical excitement that had attended the old. But the quality of anticipation had altered. Despite the complex tragedy of the years '14 to '18, they had been clarified by the dramatic simplification of war. Victory was it to be, or defeat? And for all the world the Armistice had satisfied to a greater or less extent that *dramatic* necessity. The Allies had beaten Germany. But afterward something quite different happened. The characters, heroic or despicable, became confused; the very stage on which the world's events were being acted fell in, so that it was hard to see what was going forward. The world became not a play with *parts*, but a confused pageant of universal dissolution. Or was it rebirth?

In reading the paper in Henry's kitchen, I felt that society straight around the earth was shown to have a volcanic core, imperfectly surfaced with the gravel of governments and trade. It might burst out at any point, quite possibly right under one's nose in Pennsylvania, a jet of magnificent lava,

destroying good and evil on the earth, and certainly changing the landscape.

I was young enough to anticipate the eruptions with enthusiasm, and to believe they were necessary because of a restless and inevitable chemistry at work beneath the surface of the earth.

'So you are going to leave me to-day?' said Henry, filling up my coffee cup. 'Well, who is going to read to me the Greek plays now?'

Russia was having to face counter-revolution by Denikine, I meditated. The volcano in Europe seemed to me invested with such superior and arresting vitality that it was a little like coming into a shadow world to fall back into the kitchen, to watch Henry moving dishes into the sink, and to 'listen to his Bourbon and Kiwani.'

'I will come to see you often, Henry,' I assured him, 'and if you need a Greek play in a hurry, ring Plaza 6240.'

Haviland and I had decided to leave Henry's kitchen and the Crown Prince of Bulgaria's bed. We delayed over and over again, because we had become fanatic admirers of Henry and had got used to each other and the darkness of his kitchen. But it was a long way from the club Haviland had joined, and he coveted a place where he could dress by electric light. He would like to have lived at the club, but could merely and just afford the dues;

so he came with me in a new arrangement for economy I had discovered. It was a spare 'suite' in a social settlement! — for which we paid three dollars a week apiece.

The suite was on Spring Street. Originally a tenement rented by Italians, it had in the name of God been turned into a gymnasium and a dance-hall. Two adjoining rooms left on the top floor had been used as offices, but later degenerated into storerooms. I found them through a disillusioned missionary, a former occupant, who said it would be a 'help to the settlement to get the rooms rented.' The rooms were the shabby top floor of a genuine tenement in the Wop district, but they were a minute from the Seventh Avenue subway and had electric lights!

Haviland moved in an immense amount of stuff which he had kept in storage while hibernating in Henry's cellar. He had clothes, pictures, and a whole trunk of costumes, including several Chinese ones. All Sunday we domesticated the tenement. But despite the real enthusiasm I had for our new situation, I seemed to feel that the rooms and Spring Street, New York, and the world were all balancing unsteadily on their foundations. Stretching forward into an unknown future from the sharp mark of the present was the unsteady colonnade of events whose perspective I had glimpsed in the morning paper.

Behind that in the immediate past — which at the moment seemed to absorb all there had ever been — were my several months' labor in the roaring steel mill, and behind that the incalculable confusion and carnage of the War.

'For a few years the world will contain a molten charge like a steel furnace,' I thought. 'Anything can be done to the mixture by adding carbon or manganese or sulphur. But in five years at the outside, it will be poured off into new moulds.'

I turned over that thought again and again, and was pleased by those words I had found for it.

It was Haviland who in the end discovered a New York editor who would hire me, and I sought him out in a modern office building on Fourth Avenue. The elevator took me to the top floor, where old English lettering printed on a glass door said quietly: 'Economic Weekly.' It was a sober answer to my curiosity about the volcanic center of the world. I knocked, but a mild roar enfeebled the sound. I opened the door. There were typewriters in different keys, and the bass thump of some unknown machine.

Inside was a square room with a tremendous table in the middle; and around it, four people at the crisis of an argument. The machine that was making the thump was a stenciling-machine, going at full tilt

and fed brown paper by a blonde girl with devotional intensity, and wearing earrings. A false partition ran back of the machine from which came the clatter of typewriters soprano, tenor, and bass. My entrance had no effect whatever. The argument, which concerned a printer's crime, continued and increased. I noticed a man who held in his hand long sheets of proof which flopped around his legs, and a young woman who made menacing gestures at him with a manuscript. In the end a thin, faded, papery girl with a Dutch bob came over to me.

'Mr. Croton?' I asked.

She pointed to a door, so that I noticed for the first time that the other side of the room was flanked with offices. They had legends: 'Industrial Disputes,' 'Technical Adviser,' and 'Editor.' I knocked loudly on the last.

Inside I found a tiny ball of a man seated at a desk, writing fiercely, with awful facial distortions. In the end he put his head close to the paper, and followed the progress of his pen conscientiously with his chin.

The desk was covered with books; the floor, strewn with them, particularly about his chair, from which they flowed outward in concentric waves. There was a case of books for each wall, save that in one corner stood and glittered on a shelf of new pine wood a massive Russian Eikon. There were candles

on either hand, though they were not lighted. Framed and hung upon the only remaining wall space was the photograph of an American infantry company.

The ball-like man at the desk, lifting his head for a moment and turning eyes of snapping light upon mine, said, 'Just a minute.' He then doubled the fever of his writing and sank into a closer and a fiercer crouch. It was nearly a page before he stood up, holding out his hand and surprising me by saying, 'Mr. Burnham.'

I shook a tiny cushioned substance and looked into green starry eyes set in a bloodless, yellow, and unguent face. He wore a 'quiet business suit' threateningly tight about the thighs and abdomen.

'I have had a nice letter just this morning,' he said, smiling me promptly into a seat and rebounding into his own, 'from my wonderful crazy friend, Austin. We are both skeptics, fierce admirers of the great Voltaire; and so I meet him at book sales, to get the early editions of "Candide." I, of course, am poor and I buy practically nothing. Austin says he is poor. Isn't he a charming, crazy boy? I was walking with him one afternoon along Broadway, and you, if you know Austin, will recognize how this is like him. An old victoria drove by Times Square — Austin would call it a low-neck hack. There are about a dozen left in New York, in a line outside

the Waldorf Astoria. Remember? A passion seized Austin to drive that immodest hack. He left me. He ran and leaped on the driver's seat. The poor cabby was ninety and wore a top hat.

'Austin took the hat and the reins, and he really galloped the whole of Broadway, the cabby's white hair in the breezes. My God! I lost my breath at Fifty-Fourth Street. Austin Haviland I love. He is so crazy.'

I recognized the perfectly authentic character of this story, and would have been fascinated by the vision of Haviland galloping in a victoria if the present moment, with its clustering absurdities, had not baffled me. The fat, starry-eyed Jew sitting there with census reports, a Russian Eikon, and a photograph of the 301st Artillery, D Battery, seemed to me infinitely more ridiculous than Haviland in a hack, even a low-neck hack, galloping on Broadway.

'What experience have you had?' he asked.

I gave it to him, my two years as reporter on a Boston daily, and how I spelled the managing editor when he was ailing, off and on for a whole spring and summer.

Mr. Croton wasn't interested. I could tell by the perfectly vague lolling movement of his head and the generalized smile he produced at intervals. Either he had decided overwhelmingly in my favor any-

how, or he had decided emphatically against me. I couldn't tell which.

'Of course,' he began greasily, after I had finished a brief but not a modest account of my apprenticeship, 'we need no help on the "Economic Weekly." I do the editorial work with the help of Mr. Mahoney, who is both an engineer and an auditor — a very remarkable person. The others — the clerical force — with Miss Colquhoun, do all the printer business, mailing, and so on.' We synthesize the economic news of the world, so far as it affects labor. Not propaganda . . . purely analysis . . . anybody might have thought of it . . . nobody did . . .'

I began to grow restive and annoyed. If he had no job for me, it was an insufferable vanity on his part to consider that I had a disinterested enthusiasm for his fuddy-duddy economics. I stared past his round head, covered with dark, oiled ringlets parted in the middle, and studied angrily the 301st Artillery. In the front rank, in private's uniform, with his campaign hat on the back of his head, stood Mr. Croton next to a caisson, smiling his large vague smile.

I jumped out of my chair, partly from nervousness, partly in order to blunt the edge of his economics.

'Oh!' I said, 'you were in the 301st.'

His smile visibly sharpened. 'Eighteen months,' said he, 'till I was gassed. Where were you?'

I told him. We talked for about ten minutes about the Army. He had enlisted at Camp Devens, and been discharged a second lieutenant. He talked with enthusiasm of the whole experience . . . despite his being so very evidently an educated German Jew of perhaps fifty years of age! As we went on through the subject of French mud to the stupidity of officers, I felt a second wave of annoyance stealing over me. I glanced at the shelf over his desk and noticed Volume VII of the Report of the United States Industrial Commission of 1906, cheek by jowl with a copy of Engels. 'This is all very amusing,' I thought to myself, 'but . . .'

'Well, well,' he was saying with his fat fingers folded over the threatening seam of his trousers.

I looked at him with undisguised hostility. He glanced meditatively at the chaos of papers around him.

'I need no one to help me on the "Weekly,"' he said. I looked for my hat. 'But if some one could take the supervision of all that' — he flicked his fingers at the hubbub beyond the glass door — 'off my hands, I could finish up some small studies. They have been hanging fire for a long time: Finnish Socialism in North America, a useful record; and an essay in American Sociology, which I will call "The Cult of Hygiene," or perhaps "The Cult of the Clean."'

I realized that I had been hired by Mr. Croton only when he introduced me to the four persons at the top of their argument around the big table.

'This is the new managing editor, Mr. Burnham,' he said, 'who will take charge of the *mechanics* of publication.' He retired, backward, with a step of hesitation and his lolling smile, till within a few feet of the sanctum door, when he dove in.

The argument stopped at once, and so did the stenciling-machine. The four persons stood about me in immense indecision, with weak hostile smiles on their faces. The proofs in Mr. Mahoney's hands crackled.

'My name is Mary Colquhoun,' said the young woman with cordiality. I became aware of her as though she were light through a window whose curtain had been quickly raised. She had burning yellow hair, coiled simply into one knot behind, and a smile that embraced you. Some undiscoverable blemish saved her beauty from being quite classic. I shook hands, and after the episode had a feeling of gratitude, to her beauty, I think, but not to herself.

I plunged into my duties with a vast enthusiasm. It was fed by the thought that these extraordinary people might be in secret league with the bursting forces of the new world and by a sense of immense confusion around me. At the root of the confusion

lay the system of 'borrowed services' by which the 'Economic Weekly' was run. The intensely devotional blonde girl who had been feeding the stenciling-machine was really a bookkeeper, who owed her first allegiance to the 'Treasurer's Office' across the hall. Mary Colquhoun was a kind of secretary-directress, at home only in a room labeled 'Committee on Political Action.' The 'Economic Weekly' was an incident — one might say an accident — of a larger organization, an immense amorphous thing it appeared to me, that spread itself over the whole top floor. It consisted of a school, a political party, and other things quite obscure to my preoccupied consciousness. Only Mr. Croton, a messenger boy, and the faded, jaundiced girl with the stringy Dutch bob were wholly devoted to the magazine. The jaundiced girl, Miss Reese, was expected to 'coördinate the mechanics' of the paper, with the manual and clerical aid of temporary recruits from all over the top floor. Unfortunately the recruits had less time, but more authority, than Miss Reese. They pointed out her errors in organization and then left unread proof on her hands. As a result, despite Mr. Croton's exhaustive researches, supplying what seemed to me useful stuff, the sheet never came out on time; often not at all.

With the aid of the messenger boy, I stole a desk from the 'Treasurer's Office,' and began the most

drastic reforms. I hired a professional proof-reader and fired all the casuals, except Miss Colquhoun, who promised to give me Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. I put the jaundiced girl onto a letter file — they had been using the bottom drawer — and I made up the paper myself with glue, scissors, and Mr. Croton. The printer began to do a neat and wholesome typographical performance when he found he could rely on getting his copy a day or two before press night. In a month we were quite a happy family. I discovered also that the chief reason we lost subscribers was because the Post Office could read only sixty per cent of our addresses. This was all immensely good fun for me, because I like the sound of typewriters in different keys, I enjoy chess-playing with bits of proof on the make-up dummy, and the smell of fresh ink on newly printed paper gives me happiness.

I acquired respect for Mr. Croton and Mr. Mahoney. They received all the trade-union 'organs,' all the confidential 'business services,' and all the latest financial statements in the country, and made pointed summary of them all each week. Mr. Mahoney was a civil engineer and a certified public accountant; Mr. Croton's professional status was mysterious; he was said to have written a thesis at a German university on the Slavonic liturgies of the Eastern Church, and been denied his degree because

of radical opinions displeasing to the Prussian authorities. But that was a thing obscurely known, at least to my wing of the top floor. I began to gain the impression — which I still hold — that Mr. Croton knew a little of everything and a great deal of most things, except, of course, the technique of issuing a weekly magazine, which I was gladly able and proud to furnish him.

The 'Weekly,' so far as I could see, had no buried motive. If there was any guile connected with it, it lay in its generalized and dusty title. It reported economic changes as they affected the laboring man. But I looked in vain to find how Karl Marx, or the Zionists, or the Single-Taxers had twisted Mr. Croton's 'Comments' or Mr. Mahoney's figures.

I held the job of Managing Editor of the 'Economic Weekly' at forty-five dollars a week, and felt rich. Besides I was immensely busy from nine in the morning till five, six, or seven at night; and this is the reason, I suppose, why my restless curiosity about a molten world was for several weeks well curbed. Neither it nor my body found time to pursue natural channels over the rest of the top floor. The personal mechanics of the situation, to begin with, called for all my powers. It wasn't easy to persuade Miss Tremaine, of the room marked 'Committee on Trade Unions,' to submit to the removal of her heart's desire. But that had to be done. She

used to neglect her work in the Committee on Trade Unions room, whatever that was, to spend her time in ours. She felt she had 'editorial instincts,' and gave them rein in a technic of proof-reading which was spirited and wholly personal. She was very destructive of Mr. Mahoney's sentences. Ultimately I dismissed her entirely and sent her back to whatever she did across the hall.

Miss Reese, the jaundiced girl with the string bob, suffered an inferiority complex, which induced in her a kind of nervous paralysis whenever Mary Colquhoun came in and began to do some of the subscription work she had been doing theoretically with great brilliance for months. Easily my big triumph was teaching the messenger Ralph to stencil. The boy had ripened instincts for leisure and conversation while that awful machine required both nervous application and a measure of solitude. But I won — by kindness intermixed with bribery.

Thus I worked and achieved a singular happiness, with little thought for what went on in the 'committee rooms.' At night, in the reformed Wop tenement, I would tell stories about Miss Reese, or Mr. Croton, to Haviland, till 'the new Cyrano,' as we called him, choked with appreciation, and countered with one of his funniest conquests.

My first strong curiosity about the other half of the top floor and the hidden flames of revolt that

might burn there arose from the yellow hair and modulated voice of Mary Colquhoun. Tuesdays and Thursdays were the days on which we sent Mr. Mahoney's and Mr. Croton's copy to the printer, and Miss Colquhoun helped me edit Mr. Mahoney's. She sat at one end of that immense table, and I twelve feet away at the other. Between us, spaciously, were Tuesday's proof, several feet of technical magazines, and neat piles of Mahoney copy. My regular proof-reader — a woman of fifty with twenty-one years of experience on encyclopædias — was having her appendix out. Miss Colquhoun took her place. Wearing a woolen dress of pure white, with an embroidered design in purple silk at the neck and wrists, she sat bending her beautiful head over inky proofs. Suddenly her young arms, bared to the elbow, conveyed Webster's dictionary from its private stand to the oak table. She sat with it open before her, her elbow on the page, her chin in her hand, and the level rays of autumn sunset turning her bent head into reddish gold. She looked like the recording angel, putting mankind's sins into the Book of Life. Yet the only sins she was recording were Mahoney's grammatical ones. She was taking out handfuls of hyphens, of which he was lavish and erratic, and putting a few back into authorized positions.

Suddenly the proof fell, crumpled, out of her hand, and she stood up with a swish of dress, but

delicately, without jarring the chair on whose edge she had been carefully sitting.

'That makes me perfectly furious!' she asserted in a voice of angrily chiming bells, flushing deeply, and stamping her foot. She was perfectly beautiful.

I opened my eyes and my mouth. I dropped the dummy out of my hands. I thought wildly.

'They have thrown the Socialists out of Albany!' she cried in such a tone of challenge that the typewriters behind the pasteboard partition ceased, and Miss Reese lifted her stringy bobbed head from the letter file.

'For twenty-five years there have been Socialists in the parliaments of Europe,' she continued in a lowered but definitely exalted key. 'The oppressed monarchies of Europe!' she sneered. 'Only in America ——' burning the word out with a fine, singeing irony. Then suddenly conscious she sat down, blushing.

'But isn't it absurd,' she said, smiling at herself, 'that the Republican Party of New York —— The only way that the masses will gain a hearing in America is by organizing a real third party,' she began again. 'Intelligentsia and Labor! Mr. Hollis will be able to use this,' she added, and subsided into turning over the pages of the dictionary.

I looked at her, admiring her beauty, and hearing

over again the ringing bells of her voice. 'Mr. Hollis?' I asked.

'He heads the Committee on Political Action.'

I got her to talk at the risk of having the Mahoney copy late at the printer's. She and Mr. Hollis, she said, with words at once musical and documentary, were organizing a national labor party. 'Mr. Hollis and the Committee are very conscious of their personal insignificance.' The party was being 'forged by events beyond their control.'

My curiosity was now aroused both about Miss Colquhoun and 'the other half of the top floor.' Perhaps I had come at last upon the revolutionary moulders of the new society — but I kept my skepticism intact.

'How do a labor party, and a school, and the "Economic Weekly," and Mr. Mahoney fit together?' I asked. 'Are they all a great plot to reform the world?'

She gave me a second's hard stare and then said quietly, 'They are federated units.'

I swallowed this, and asked for more. It seemed a little absurd that I had never made these inquiries. I knew that the 'Weekly' was issued under the vague auspices of the S.P.G., 'The Social Policy Group.' Was there ever a more inspired achievement in vacuous phraseology? I herded the Hollises and their committees together as flaccid, well-

intentioned social workers. So they were going to found a national party!

'Each department,' said Miss Colquhoun, summing up, 'must work out its own problems — the Committee on Impartial Information ——'

'Is that *us?*' I asked suddenly.

'Mr. Croton is chairman,' she returned. 'But they all contribute, severally,' she went on, enjoying the words, and speaking as though they all came out of a constitution, 'to build up the new social order.'

'Do I contribute,' I said slowly, 'to — the new social order?'

She began to laugh, and her eyes played with me.

'Mr. Croton,' she said, still quivering with amusement, 'likes you very much; he thinks,' she continued with a new tremor of mirth, 'that you have some of the most lovable of the old bourgeois qualities.'

I was relieved when a door opened, and the bony face of Mr. Mahoney bent over our table and laid upon it a new increment of statistics. Miss Colquhoun sank her golden head over them and Mr. Mahoney retired.

In five minutes she looked up. 'Here are some figures from Russia,' she sang. 'How do we spell Trotsky in the "Weekly," — *s k y* or *s k i?*'

I didn't know, but I brought her the file of old 'Weeklies.' We looked it through together, standing

at the table beside each other, and each at intervals seized with an idea of where the name had occurred in issues past. She waited impatiently for my failure, and hustled the pages through with her pointed fingers. The woolen sleeve scratched against my coat. I said to myself: 'This is sheer waste of time. We shall be late for the printer. And I am certain our usage is *y* and not *i*.' But I was delighted when she stopped to read bits of other articles that excited her. 'Every time she does that,' I said to myself, 'it shows she is willing to stand here a little longer beside me.' Finally she gave me a tiny smile and said: 'I'll ask my husband; he remembers everything.'

The door slammed, and I sat down in the chair at my end. 'Idiot!' I whispered, picking up my printer's dummy, and repeating the word passionately when I found that I couldn't see the page.

Before the following Tuesday, I considered a number of points. Wasn't it bourgeois, I remarked to myself, to believe, because she was a Miss Colquhoun, she had no husband? And if she were married, I doubt very much if she loves him. Besides, I concluded, I am not in love with her.

With this clearly reasoned position behind me, I asked Miss Colquhoun on the following Tuesday if she would go with me to the steel strike rally in Cooper Union that evening. She accepted. Through

the remainder of the afternoon — I had asked her at two — I refrained from talking, and dictated all my arrears of correspondence to Miss Reese.

At twenty minutes of five, Mr. Richard Hollis entered, causing sudden stoppage of the stencilingmachine, while Miss Reese devoted to him a long and attentive stare. I had seen Mr. Hollis before, casually — his back and his profile moving hurriedly across the hall — 'in the other half of the top floor.'

He came in quietly and stood near the door talking to Mahoney. I stared at him over the top of my proof-sheets. He was a handsome man who looked like a 'philosopher in politics,' I said at once. No, like a head master, who has traveled for a number of years, been in the world, and yet is lingeringly a head master still. I don't know. He was tall, filled out a little more than necessary, with a tall straight brow, broader at the top than across his eyes, and light dry hair, which looked disorderly with distinction. I liked him. His eyes as he talked with Mahoney were filled with a kindly curiosity.

Miss Colquhoun hadn't seen him at first, so deep had she buried herself in Mahoney's statistics. When she did, looking over the top of her dictionary, she cried, 'Richard!' and ran over to him. Her eyes were shining with such worship that I turned away.

'Mary,' he said.

She took both of his hands, put them together, and searched his face as if she were afraid of what she might find there. He began to tell her at once about the trip he had just made to the miners' convention. They had declared themselves, he said, in favor of a national party.

'You made them a speech!' she cried, looking as though she were not over sixteen. But before he could answer they had caught sight of me. How could they help it?

'Oh, this is Mr. Burnham!' she said, dividing into two equal parts her wonderful smile. 'He runs the "Weekly" for us, and now it comes out on time.'

Mr. Hollis shook hands.

'You have performed a miracle,' he said solemnly.

We stood talking in a quiet way with a subtle sense of leisure surrounding us that seemed to me very pleasant and wholesome. We talked about the S.P.G. (Mr. Hollis was President); about Mr. Croton's extraordinary learning, and the queer pride he took in his service in the 301st Artillery.

'You know he is a pacifist,' said Mr. Hollis; 'was before the War, is now.'

After that we talked about the 'revolutionary temper that follows great wars.' A feeling of respect and affection crept over me for Mr. Hollis, mixed, I was not sure to what degree, with a sense of relief at having 'placed' Mary Colquhoun. She seemed to

me so gorgeously happy in his presence, and he so utterly the person to satisfy and control her. My excited feelings toward her melted into a warm stream of affection for them both.

'Mr. Hollis,' I said, 'I have asked your wife to go with me to the steel strike rally to-night. Won't you come with us?'

He looked at me steadily, not with a cold, but with an arrested expression, as if his intelligence had ceased at the point where I began speaking. It lasted only a second till Miss Colquhoun leaned over Hollis's shoulder, and laughed a modulated clangor of chimes — bending her head and dragging at his sleeve. 'He thinks I am married to you, Richard!' she said in a low cry that was still musical.

I stood feeling that the most awful moment of my life had come, and wanting to bury it somewhere in the proof-sheets. At the same time I felt defiant, with a sense that this embarrassment was the fruit of her tactlessness.

'He thinks you are my husband,' she repeated, laughing.

I felt my scalp rising and my head burning and dizzy, but inside it was a great pressure to say *something*. And the something must be said carelessly. I tried to frame the words. Perhaps it would be this: 'Then what, Miss Colquhoun, would you have me call him?' But she began to speak.

'I am married to Henry Clay, Mr. Burnham. I thought of course you *knew*, but why should you? You must promise me one thing — that when I introduce you, you will tell my husband all about it.'

Mr. Hollis was smiling as easily as she, and I began to feel the blood sink slowly from my head. Before he left, he came over to my chair and shook hands: 'Come and see me,' he said.

I went to the rally with Miss Colquhoun, but I didn't enjoy it. She said: 'That was funny, wasn't it, this afternoon? You must forgive me for laughing so; Richard Hollis is a very old and a very dear friend.' But I still felt wretched, like a schoolboy who has been surprised into a blunder, because of innocence and the extremity of his youth.

Miss Colquhoun kept her promise and introduced me to Henry Clay, her 'real husband.' One day she caught me passing the open door of the Committee Room on Trade Unions and pushed me into it, physically, with her fingers between my shoulder blades so that I stumbled over the threshold. The crowded, I would say the dense, arrangement of the room was appalling. Desks with inset typewriters stood touching one another, like crowded tenements, with an alley between. There was just room in the alley for narrow tables at which very young girls dropped circulars into envelopes with periodic mo-

notony. Charts, black and colored, heavy-lined and spidery, covered all the walls.

The office of the 'Economic Weekly' appealed to me in reminiscence like a Montana prairie, and I could think of nothing that resembled Mr. Clay's rooms. Unless it was the vitals of a submarine — mechanism and humanity integrated with that bewildering efficiency that to the outsider seems chaos.

'Henry,' cried Miss Colquhoun, and '*Hen*ry!' — until a brown suit draped on a gaunt frame rose slowly from the farthest desk and looked at her over the heads of the envelope girls. It was only later that I realized his face was really expressionless; it was so homely in an impudent fashion that even with immobility I thought an insult was intended.

'I want you to meet Mr. Burnham,' said Mary Colquhoun, and I tried to think how to introduce with the greatest carelessness the story of Richard. Henry Clay came over to us, picking his way with great skill around the backs of office chairs and between the envelope tables; arrived in a minute, he shook hands from the elbow down. It would be wrong to say that he relaxed into a smile; he tightened into one, skinning his teeth, and deepening the channels around his mouth. His ears rose.

I smiled back, not at him but at the ears, which, as they rose, seemed longer than before. He waited,

long enough to lose the smile and regain a normal and expressionless rigidity.

'I have charted the circulation of the "Economic Weekly,"' he said, speaking in a dry but curiously perfect diction. 'It is wholly urban and largely Eastern.'

The words came out with a thin but extraordinary authority. Yet they seemed to be depersonalized, a part of an external order of truth — dislocated, and translated out of relation with the present moment, with Miss Colquhoun, or with me. In a few minutes he had begun explaining the work of the Committee on Trade Unions.

'Textiles advance,' he said, and pointed to a gallery of charts that showed by thick black lines the conquering march of trade unions into cotton mills. Further charts gave a graphic and amazing record of the spread of labor organization into all trades, and pictured not only the crafts, but their financial strength. I marveled at the ingenuity and subtlety of the charts, guessing that for Henry Clay, husband of Mary Colquhoun, life held no sustaining motive save the impersonal, the as-far-as-possible mathematical pursuit of these phenomena.

The envelope girls had finished their task and begun a new one. It was the wrapping of heavily headlined broadsides into packages of three or four hundred apiece. I fished up one of the broadsides to

read it. It was entitled: 'Did God give your employer his factory?' And it closed with the words: 'The class weapon is all-powerful. Strike! in the name of the World Proletariat, and recapture your property.'

Henry Clay had gone back to his desk while I was reading the broadside. Mary Colquhoun was still there, smiling; and in the midst of my bewilderment, I continued to hate and admire her with equal passion. But what was to be said? I murmured an apology and hurried back to the freer and heartier atmosphere of my proof-room, with its big table and its three typewriters behind pasteboard partitions. Mr. Croton's door was open.

'Who writes such nonsense as this?' I said, putting the broadside close to his starry eyes.

'Henry Clay,' he answered.

I swallowed for a minute or two, thinking of his diction, his charts, and the cold ingenuity of his mind.

'Richard, of course, is a Liberal and disapproves. Henry, the Jesuit, thinks them useful.'

'It is pure Bolshevism!' I shouted.

'Oh, Henry is no Bolshevik,' said Croton. 'No one can measure or dissect Henry's economics. Some argue he is an Anarchist. But what sense is there in that? The only thing one knows with certainty is that he stands well to the left of any one he has ever met.'

I said something inarticulate and began to laugh.

'Richard detests his views; but as a good Liberal, feels he must keep Henry in the S.P.G.; it is a matter of principle. . . . But have you ever seen Henry's system of charts?'

'Oh, yes!' I cried; but feeling my self-control slipping, I hurried away.

Back in my tenement room in the late afternoon I sat smoking a pipeful of Haviland's tobacco. 'To pour the world into "new moulds,"' I murmured, 'now!' Then I thought of Henry Clay and Mary Colquhoun. 'What a goddam ass I've been!' I concluded.

In the end it was a relief to turn my mind to the old and leisurely curiosities that had been friendly to me for years. I read speeches aloud out of the 'Prometheus,' and when that failed, looked at the north skyline through the open window. But steadily the volcanic center of the world burned through this outer ring of consciousness, and my baffled curiosity, ceasing to be the heady joy it had always been, sank through unrestful stages into a dull pain.

CHAPTER III

PLANET REMELTED

A DAY came in the following month which sucked up all my powers as editor. We forced a four-page supplement through the press; I wrote the thing in the morning from predigested statistics and fought it through the printer's hands in the afternoon. It was executed in the teeth of the united opposition of the superintendent and the press foreman. Exhausted, I moved along the hall to put an advance sheet on Mr. Hollis's desk at six o'clock. He intended to use it in a speech to a seminar of enlightened business men. I found him sitting not at his desk, but in a cushioned chair, almost hidden in blue smoke. As I gazed through to him, he seemed to me an image not of passive but of leisured and thoughtful contentment. I envied him. He began to talk about Mr. Croton's temperament, and his love for phrases of Teutonic density and length.

Suddenly he broke off: 'What are your economics, Burnham?'

I blushed, feeling as embarrassed as if he had said: 'Come, now, tell me about your sex impulses.' I answered that I had no economics, only curiosities.

'I have them, too,' he returned, smiling like the

head master, 'but I am willing to gamble a little in order to give them a sharper focus.' He smoked quietly for almost a minute. 'I have a massive and unconquerable curiosity about men and the way they organize into economic groups.' He crossed his legs, sat up, and lit his pipe all over again.

'I am willing to gamble, not on the way they are going to organize in the future, but on the direction they are taking. That direction,' he continued musically, amid periodic bursts of smoke, 'is toward semi-dependent democratic industrial republics. A republic of cotton,' he continued, 'not an oligarchy — a republic of rubber, and a republic of steel.'

He is quite crazy, I thought, as I hurried home. A guild socialist. And yet what a plausible framework for a curious mind. I heard his cool words, crowned with leisured rings of blue smoke, thudding on my hot ears: 'I am willing to gamble . . .' And it is perfectly true, I said to myself, that it is necessary to 'sharpen' one's curiosities.

It was decided at a staff meeting that I be given a 'trial membership' in the S.P.G., a novitiate in the friendly monastery of Richard Hollis and Company. If the rule and faith of the order satisfied the inward cravings of spirit and curiosity, and the conduct and state of grace I achieved was pleasing to the monastery, I was to be embraced. I would then be a full

staff member with Croton, Miss Colquhoun, and the rest and be given one vote. 'An experimental credo,' Richard Hollis said, but of course, like any order, it meant loving the brotherhood and despising the world. I found that I did so. With them I felt warm and comfortable; with others, suspicious, a little cold, and misunderstood.

I still carried on my work as dictator-diplomat between Croton and the printer in the big room with the stenciling-machine, but there was a difference. Conversations, which had formerly stopped when I approached, flowed on, or even changed their course to include my temper and opinion. I became familiar with the 'committee rooms' across the hall, and with some of their visitors. A United States Senator, who had his speeches written there, the president of one of the railroad brotherhoods, and Foster (W. Z.), the organizer, agitator, and leader of the steel strike. The room I liked best was the Directors'. There were more wisdom, more humor, more leisure, and more comfortable chairs there than in any other, and I could go in at any moment and have Mr. Hollis drop his letters and his work for one cigarette with me, and sometimes for two or three. This, it seemed to me, argued that his mind was beautifully organized. How else could he run the seven-headed S.P.G., yet find time for whimsy and for argument with me?

The first staff meeting of the S.P.G. stands in my mind not only with a clear sharpness, as though it had been this morning, but set in the midst of a radiance that makes it almost a new experience even when I think of it now. Although some of the light, I was conscious even then, came through murky and discolored glass, and other rays that made up the very quality of the event were coming not from the persons themselves, or the S.P.G. as it existed, but literally from the four corners of the earth.

The meeting took place in a room of comfortable armchairs and red oak mouldings. Actually the directors' room of a rubber company before the new world was born, it was now christened the 'Staff's Council Chamber.' I sat enjoying the electricity of anticipation that touches one's arms and legs, and talking with an immense, dark-haired boy of twenty-four who sat in the seat beside me. He had graduated from Harvard in 1917, and for two years had blackened his hands in coal mines, becoming, at length, a district organizer for the union. He looked a little like the type which runs away to sea, enlists in the navy, and ultimately by sheer pluck and persistence becomes an admiral.

'I have no use,' he said, looking about the room with a hateful glance of suspicion, 'for the intellectuals. They clog the movement. . . . But,' he added, after another survey, 'Dick Hollis asked me to come in; I'm glad to look 'em over.'

I looked about the armchairs, passing from face to face: Mr. Croton, Mary Colquhoun, Mr. Mahoney, an empty chair at the head for Mr. Hollis, who was late. I paused long and satisfactorily over a keenly remembered presence. Then the other side of the long table, Mrs. Hollis, a lady of forty with red hair in the impermanent last stage of a permanent wave — whom I had never met. Beside her Mr. Henry Clay, and beside him an alert, large-headed person, the treasurer, whom I hardly knew. He struck me as efficient. He is like the promising junior partner, I mused, of an old firm of investment brokers — or even an alert, very young, English bishop.

On the whole I felt happy and buoyant. Despite the laughable bodies of many of them and the knobs and defects of their different humanities, they all had the unspeakable miracle of imagination. They knew enough to sail before the wind and not try to beat back to an old port that really was useless to them now, and good only for dying men and the waves.

In these waiting minutes before the arrival of the president and chairman, every one talked to his neighbor or to the 'member' opposite in remarkably subdued colloquy. Until a discussion taken up by Mary Colquhoun and Mrs. Hollis demanded the attention of all. Or rather Mrs. Hollis's red hair and voice demanded the attention and got it. I was sure

when I looked at her that at one time she had longed to be a very fashionable woman. She was not only not fashionable now, but escaped by very little the impression of being defiantly unfeminine. I thought of her life history which had been outlined to me by Miss Reese, the girl of the straight string bob, who knew, I discovered, the lives of every S.P.G. — including myself. Mrs. Hollis, she said, had married 'beneath her' a promising college professor, who some years later had 'gone radical.' The significant point in the 'life,' which Miss Reese did not mention, was that she had 'gone' much more 'radical' than her husband. As I listened to her I was sure, however, that whatever she believed about 'revolution' had in no way affected her manner. She had the technic of the social superior for continuous speech: climbing in on the edge of irrelevant remarks to control forever after the flow of talk. With a woman opponent she plunged confidently into midstream of the other's words and invariably survived, being the huskier swimmer of the two. When she spoke, Mary Colquhoun's musical tones were pitiably deleted from the air, as a pianoforte is silenced by a riveter. But the argument I learned after several minutes' attention was 'direct action for political ends.'

'I wonder,' said Mrs. Hollis, with her arm flung over the back of her chair, and looking at Mary

Colquhoun through half-closed eyes, 'if you believe in the right to strike?'

At this insult, Mary Colquhoun blushed.

Mrs. Hollis proceeded with unscrupulous irony to develop the theme that the present use of police force by 'the capitalists' is none other than 'direct action.'

'What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander,' she gave out, a final rivet.

Mary Colquhoun began at last. Her voice was musical as ever, but embarrassed, and at that I was disturbed, and wondering. 'Direct action,' she began, 'is revolution, and revolution in America would be fatal.'

Mrs. Hollis watched her curiously as though she were an animal.

'My dear,' she said at last, 'you *are* a radical.' She gave a pretty laugh, putting a hand to her back hair and looking down at the rest of us.

'Why,' she cried in the merriest of tones, throwing her hands together, 'she's more reactionary than *Richard!*'

The conversation became general by conscious effort, and I heard only one fragment more, minutes later. It was thrown over the table by Mary Colquhoun. Her face was white, and for the first and last time — to my knowledge — her voice was unmusical. It sounded like an old woman's. She said:

'When I went to jail, Alice Hollis, for Pacifism . . .' then I lost it, catching it only some seconds later '. . . a fine radical you were, my dear, at *Nice!* . . .'

At that moment Mr. Hollis came in.

He walked to his seat with that air of poise and leisure which I loved, and the buzz of voices that had been thrown up to cloak the 'direct action' duel between Mrs. Hollis and Mary Colquhoun ceased, as did the duel itself. Mr. Hollis was followed by two persons. The first was Carl Drinker, field head of the Committee on Trade Unions, the traveling knight-errant of the S.P.G., whom I had just met. He had returned from a month in the steel strike area, and had a cut on his forehead from the hoof of a mounted policeman's horse, one of Pennsylvania's 'mud' guard. He was short, with cheeks that had blood flecks under the skin produced by the wind, and hair that looked sunned and blown. He walked to the chair at Hollis's left — unconscious of everybody, as if he were alone in the woods. I would have said 'mining engineer,' but I learned he had been a newspaper man all his life!

The other man was a 'hulking' Irishman of sixty-odd, a labor leader, quite untamed, whom the Harvard miner named as 'International President' of the electricians' union. He looked around quickly with the shrewdest and clearest of blue eyes, and sank heavily into the last seat but one. Throughout

the meeting he kept a poker face and stared at the table. Another of Hollis's recruits, I mused. And I like him, too.

From the moment of Richard Hollis's entrance, the two women in the room gazed attentively at his face. Mrs. Hollis, it seemed to me, with amusement, and Miss Colquhoun with anxiety. Hollis looked down at his wife.

'How many times,' he said, addressing the rest of us, 'has she used the words "police power," and — let's see — "usurped by a militant minority"?' Without waiting for an answer, he put on his glasses and opened the meeting. I felt again the buoyancy and pride which I had experienced when I entered the 'council chamber.'

A report on 'the school' was given by the man who resembled an adolescent bishop. Forty-four pupils had been graduated at the half year, he related — all sons of big industrialists going into their fathers' businesses, and destined to treat the labor problem at first hand. They had been taught its elements.

'The whole department,' said Henry Clay, with his dry and beautiful diction, 'is a compromise with capitalist reaction!'

A little later Henry Clay gave his own report on 'propaganda in the trade union,' standing rigid beside his chair as he spoke. His voice, which carried

a vast load of facts out into the room, seemed completely detached from the body in which it originated. The points of his high, awkward shoulders, the head, and the white hands were the only parts one could identify under or apart from the brown suit which fell loose and wrinkling from shoulders to heels. And even the load of facts, as I listened to them, detached themselves from the voice, and lay disembodied yet substantial in the council chamber.

The final phrases of the report were interrupted by the bishop. I didn't hear his remarks — I was thinking of the trouble in Mary Colquhoun's face — though I was conscious they were an attack on Clay, more or less passionate. I heard Clay's counter, which was in the same voice as formerly, unless indeed it were drier.

'Democracy in the Labor Movement,' he stated, 'must give way to a militant general staff.' Swaying a little to one side, his brown trouser legs, which were round, swayed too, and pressed his legs on the other side. He had raised his head from the papers in his hand, and I noticed for the first time that his Adam's-apple was the size and shape of a pear.

The large-headed man, more like a bishop than ever, got on his feet and replied with inspired righteousness. He spoke in defense of democracy, and attacked Henry Clay as a Bolshevik. I was interested, but after a time the two got back to Hegel by

way of Marx, and I stopped bothering to listen. All the time, they seemed to me like a high churchman and a low churchman: Clay the high, and Heard, the low.

In fact I lost connection for a few minutes with the whole scene in the council chamber. Then it came back, with but half its dimensions. I gazed at a kind of intellectual silhouette. Twelve persons at a table — top floor of a Fourth Avenue office building — in a room with red oak mouldings. There was Mr. Hollis at the head, comfortable, philosophic, a little overfleshed. . . . The women had joined in the argument now with the churchmen. They were saying something about 'craft unionism.' Scholastics! I meditated. How many angels can stand on the point of a pin? But when I had listened for a little, I became conscious of a new truth. Discussions of radical philosophy are *never* scholastic. They are the soul's inquisition — charged with terrible consequence. And they are the most personal of all questions. Board and lodging, friendship and spiritual peace hang upon them.

Even Henry Clay's voice lost some of its externality, and became the voice of an incensed prophet. He spoke of a 'closer group' and the 'folly of promiscuous coöperation.' A magnificent phrase, I thought. I thought the issue was Mr. Heard's department, at one time, for every one attacked him

and his old-fashioned 'democracy,' while the 'sons of leading capitalists' were hauled repeatedly to the arena to allow some one to vent his disgust or hers. Mrs. Hollis asked Mr. Heard if he received fees from the Du Ponts, but that was passed over as sheer malice.

The argument, however, became less and less Mr. Heard, or even 'democracy,' and circled about the question of what was the true faith, launching ultimately into attacks on the S.P.G. itself. A variety of tests for orthodoxy were thrown up and floated for a moment on the surface of talk. But in the end, Mrs. Hollis's voice sharply obliterated all opposition. Her words were: 'We need a militant, not a *liberal* leadership!' She had dipped the word 'liberal' in acid before she spoke it.

How stupid of me, I meditated, not to see before that it is an attack on Hollis! He had not spoken once. Nor had Drinker, the S.P.G. knight-errant with a wound in his head. Perhaps he was desired as president in place of Hollis? I searched back over the muddy path of the argument with this new lantern in my hand, when I caught the eye of Mary Colquhoun. It was filled with hate, with trouble and with tears. For many months Miss Reese had told me she and her husband had been the most radical exhibits in the S.P.G. They vied with each other in it. Nothing more so was discoverable in New York.

But now . . . ? I remembered that all morning she had never repudiated any radical principles. But she had never upheld them, either. Instead she had attacked with ingenious personal virulence every one's armor but her own. She had asked Croton if he belonged to the American Legion! This, then, was all explainable, I mused, finding myself perhaps curiously less cynical than interested. She was in love with Richard, but — Once entered upon 'personal economics,' I found that a new zest had come into my thinking. But why did *Mrs.* Hollis desire so passionately to push her husband out of the presidency? Had she already lost him to Mary? Did her fanatic radicalism, a kind of inverted social pride, drive her to unnatural acts against her own heart and her husband's interest? What a terrible dilemma for the regenerators of mankind! But how absorbing! Of all the crew who had dipped in the scuffle, I was only certain of the unqualified fanaticism of Henry Clay. He, at least, had no personal passion beyond Communist ideology and the precision and mathematics of his charts. Even now he was bringing the discussion back to them, by a burst of textile statistics. But Carl Drinker stood on his feet and stopped him, with the words 'Sit down.' Infinitely to my surprise, Clay sat down at once, and remained silent.

Drinker stood with his legs apart, and waited a

minute before he spoke — in a way some men have, as if words are enclosed in their fists, to be released by relaxing the fingers. The council was very impatient for Drinker to speak.

'I was born in Ohio,' he said in a voice that had a certain edge and with that, chords of feeling and a hint of embarrassment; 'it was a town of about five thousand. I was brought up by my three aunts.' He smiled with the corners of his lips down. 'All my aunts belonged to a club, which was called the "Hearts at Home Club."' He smiled again (rather desperately in the same way). 'They met at our house, Friday afternoons, so I knew what they did. I listened in. It was the same every Friday. They knit, talked about other women's husbands, and told why they thought the minister was immoral.'

He sat down, but got up almost immediately. 'I've been in every State, where the steel strike has gone,' he cried, and then more quietly in a repeating voice, 'Ohio, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Colorado, and New York; strikers total 189,000, union, non-union, puddlers, rollers, furnace helpers, clerks, tin mill, and wire mill, Americans, Czechs, Russians, Poles, Wops. Gary said it was impossible. *Gompers doesn't believe it's happening now.* United States Steel, largest and richest corporation in the world, is tight as a drum!' He pulled out of his pocket a crumpled sheet of paper, and began to read: 'Johnstown, 1500 men; Homestead, 2200' ——

The carbonized air of Pittsburgh came into my lungs and the scene in front of seven furnaces before my eyes, with men dropping shovels and long-handled spoons to scrimmage their neighbors out of the mill with them. I could see the striker who hurled his shovel into the furnace bath, and the spatter of hot steel on his boots — the rush through the green gate, the torchlight procession and rioting at night. The numbers which Drinker was reading from the crumpled paper were enough to bring the strikers all into the room with us, where their hopes and fears became instantly ours. It seemed reasonable to suppose, *now*, that Mary Colquhoun, Richard Hollis, Clay, and the rest would be willing to join the puddlers and rollers at once in an inevitable and historic uprising.

As soon as Drinker had finished reading the figures on the steel strike, he began biting off the heads of Ernest Heard and Henry Clay.

'I believe in democracy,' he began, while Heard, visibly relaxing his expression of wounded holiness, gazed with a kind of glare at the mummified face of Henry Clay. 'But why discuss it for an hour and a half in staff meeting?' he asked, walking around the table, so that he could see Heard fully, and reduce him by scrutiny to what Miss Colquhoun called a 'soul fret.'

'What you need, Heard,' he continued, 'is a par-

ish' (I found myself whispering, 'Yes, Yes') 'where you could preach' — he paused — 'without fear of contradiction, or of affecting the beliefs of anybody. By God! you have it,' he cried with a surge of strong boyish delight, 'in your goddam school for capitalists!' So little malice was in that voice that Heard's face softened perceptibly. 'There, teaching those boys that labor has a soul, hurts nobody,' he cried. 'Henry is horrified at class "collaboration" — Holy Christ! — But does it pay? It costs the S.P.G. $2400 a year.'

He turned and faced the corpse-like Clay, who, whether from fear or inertia, failed even to blink at the knife.

'Henry should have stayed with the Communist Party,' he stated. I learned afterward from Miss Reese that he had actually at one time been a member, but that after espousing the doctrine of pacifism — even for revolutionists — they had expelled him. His summary of this incident was much quoted by S.P.G.-ers. He had said: 'I found the Communist Party wedded to primitive ideas.'

'There,' continued Drinker, 'he would have made statistics enough to involve his "revolutionists" forever, and kept them from upsetting the world.'

In this way — a very delightful way I thought — he scarified and sanitized the S.P.G., saying a great many more things, personal and otherwise, that I

didn't understand and have forgotten now. Then he sat down, but went on talking with that hint of embarrassment in his voice which completed the power of it.

'I am a radical,' he said, 'and this is what I believe. In the world's history, the benevolent employer is a washout, because change comes up from the bottom and not down from the top. That is why it is that most intellectuals pull nothing but "Hearts at Home" stuff. It is what Heard pulls when he tells the Rockefellers to be nice to their workers. It is what Clay pulls when he prescribes trade unions by mathematics for the working man.' Drinker, I felt, was excited for the first time; but he showed it by sitting still and pronouncing all his words clearly.

He began to insist on the S.P.G.'s 'only job.' It was to get the workers into trade unions — 'Not but what I have my own Utopia!' A minute or two later he sketched it for us, and it took substance as the same federated group of republics that Richard Hollis had put into my head through curling rings of smoke: a republic of cotton, a republic of rubber, a republic of steel. With temperamental modeling! It would not, he insisted, eliminate strikes and fights of various sorts. He thought, indeed, it would increase them. The difference would be that industrial warfare, which he anticipated might 'well be continuous,' would be for prizes of a higher order than

was possible at present. Strikes arising from poverty would be unknown, of course. But 'more and *happier* fights' was a distinctive feature of the Utopia. He then stated that there would be too few criminals in his Utopia to electrocute and that it would be a policy to put to death instead persons without a sense of humor, and to elect criminals to the highest offices of state as punishment. As he said this, Miss Reese came into the room with a message for Mr. Hollis. While she was crossing the room, wearing a very unbecoming dress that hung in quite a different plane from her legs, I thought of the things she had told me about Mr. Drinker. He had studied both medicine and law before he chose journalism, at which he had worked steadily for fifteen years, when he left his newspaper abruptly just before the War. He had enlisted in the Infantry, risen to a captaincy, and after a gas wound, had been transferred to Military Intelligence. Knowing German he was sent to Berlin to 'make a report.' He sat in the cellar where the Sparticides worked out plans for the revolution. For five years before the War — while he was on the newspaper — his sympathies had been 'socialistic.' Besides these, there were other items and bits of legend current in the office. He liked to drink; was, indeed, 'devoted to alcohol,' he put it himself, and 'took his liquor seriously.' Mary Colquhoun, even 'when she was an An-

archist,' Miss Reese said, was much shocked. In fact a well-founded distrust between the two was based on this issue. Carl Drinker, in addition to his love of alcohol, had, every one agreed, a passionate hatred for human injustice (his journalistic friends cynically identified the two). That explained him more than anything else. While he was still a newspaper man, he led a strike in a shoe factory where five men were fired for protesting against the 'spy system.' He stopped a lynching in Alabama, because the mob thought at first that he was going to do the lynching himself. He began by showing them the rope, yelling bloody hell, and finished by making a speech against capital punishment. They were so fascinated that they let him alone.

As I heard him now touching on the revolutionary disorders in Germany and Austria — he had been at the hot center of both — I was swept up into a warm tide of admiration for his magnificent knight-errantry. He was comparing the world to a sick patient, capable of a higher state of health than if it had never been ill with revolution.

It was an odd thing that whatever word his voice touched, whether Pittsburgh, Russia, history, health, or steel, instantly the idea became substantial, glowing, established, and true. When he read the number of steel strikers, I had seen *men*. When he had repeated — not a new phrase — 'change comes from

the bottom up and not from the top down,' I felt that he knew, and had perhaps been through the French Revolution to find out. I was conscious of twenty centuries of human history, preparing quite happily to fit themselves into that historical generalization. For the last three or four minutes he had been talking about the 'War' and the mud in France — at his words the muddy oceans around Brest became instantly a more tangible element of living than the oak council table or Mr. Hollis's fleshy and cultured face. I relived personal memories that were horrible — the butcher smell of a battle-field and the agony shrieks of hospitals. When Carl Drinker spoke of Italy and Russia, and the bloody unrest burning over Europe, I felt a flame touch my nerves. Images of upheaval and war which had grown real in Henry's kitchen, reading the newspaper at breakfast, became now a part of the living present — and part of the substance of what I had known and suffered. That was it. I could find no gap between the volcanic events of the outer world and this impassioned realization which Drinker and I had *both* found.

Suddenly I heard him saying, 'The world is molten, certainly, and it is a critical time for the furnace man.' Ah, that was my idea! 'It is really necessary,' he continued, 'for us, and people like us to decide how we want to pour the moulds or the stuff will cool in the furnaces forever.'

Though I am, of course, a small person, a slag 'clean-up,' I said to myself, I can if I will help the men who will lug destiny — *and pour the moulds!* I was dazed as though I stood at the center of many volcanoes, bursting and throwing lava about my feet. A damned dangerous position. In the midst of a ghastly and magnificent wilderness of volcanoes! But there was no alternative but to advance among them. It was too late to leave the lava country.

Drinker had abruptly grown matter-of-fact. He was urging that all departments of the S.P.G. be abandoned save one which would devote itself to a hundred per cent organization of the steel industry and the coal mines of America.

A terrific debate crowded upon the heels of that. Every one defended his back yard of personal work with passion, though they were all touched by Drinker's power. Each one advocated a ruthless pooling of all but his own department. As for myself, I was violently — passionately — in favor of Drinker's plan, eager to break up the stenciling-machine at once, and scrap the 'Weekly.' It seemed to me that here actually the decision was upon us — whether we would 'help pour the moulds,' or let them cool forever. I was horribly frightened that some breath of personal jealousy would wreck it all.

Before the debate was over, it grew so late — nearly three — that we decided to adjourn for

lunch, and then to return and fight for an ultimatum — till midnight, if necessary. The rest of the office force were in a fret to know whether all this was plain madness, or clear evidence of the approach of the Revolution.

I ate with Croton in his favorite Semitic café on Third Avenue. The Harvard miner, by the way, and the 'real labor leader' had left hours ago. I remember the fragments of a conversation that I heard, while eating a Hungarian dish recommended by Croton. It came out of the mouth of an elderly prosperous Semitic face. 'I haf had no trouble,' the man was saying, 'for t'irty-eight years, till this Bolshevik valking telegate came to my store.' I looked at the man with the same degree of pity and hostility, I suppose, with which an Athenian Greek would gaze at a Scythian.

At twenty after six, the staff voted to adopt Drinker's plan 'in principle,' allowing the school and the 'Weekly' to run out the half-year, and keeping only a skeleton organization for Hollis to found his national party upon. To me it seemed a magnificent victory of incalculable consequences.

The decision was hastily followed by the treasurer's report, read by Heard. There was some talk about the legitimacy of using funds from a great block of oil stock contributed by Hollis (the Angel of the S.P.G.). Some said it was tainted money;

others that such a consideration was 'bourgeois' and that it ought to be accepted, anyway.

I have forgotten what was done about it. I was breathing too vital and heady an oxygen to be bothered. It seemed to me that that day's work had assured, beyond question, the fortunate future of mankind.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN IN UTOPIA

HAVILAND, my actor room-mate, during these exciting days of the world's history was growing more and more seriously in love with three girls. And in order to cope with the necessities of his heart, three to four 'parties' a week became compulsory. On the Sunday after the new programme was adopted 'in principle' by the S.P.G., he begged me to make an eighth for drinking and dancing. And I did so, with contentment and curiosity and some fears for my appearance in a pre-War tuxedo.

Coming into the party last, after my walk along Bleecker Street, after the subway, after the hotel elevator, I felt immensely aware of brilliance and immensely apart from it. Like a mole crawling unexpectedly into a searchlight. It lasted while I was shaking hands with four girls, laughing all the time, and drinking my first cocktail. The impression was of a reserved brilliance, sharp, impersonal, and remote: candles in old wooden holders on the white cloth, a girl's dress made of tiny links of armor, gleaming from black to silver in the candlelight, the sharp outline of the head and form of Haviland in a dinner coat — the white teeth of everybody. A waiter moved in like a pudgy lynx, with cocktail

glasses. Then the room and contents ceased to be an etching hung at a distance on the wall and entered into my senses, becoming confused with me. I didn't listen to any sentences, or reply to them; but to laughter and the glamour of candlelight which I felt. I replied to that.

'You had Johnny Walker, Miss Hampton, and yours was Old Rye. Who had the Martini cocktail?' said Haviland, becoming a finished bar-keeper to our exuberant delight. And I was very funny as a Scotchman with a bad sixpence.

Only once did the rich minutes of magic constructed out of my singing senses crash. It was when we sat down. As the waiter insinuated a plate of soup through the narrow crack remaining between my partner and me and brought it circling to rest quite safely between the silver, I noticed he was a Croatian. Those months in the steel mill had taught me Balkan heads as intimately as ever the Prince of Bulgaria knew them. I looked intently at him and thought of the furnace helper and the chalked words on the coal shovel. He was restless under my stare, and I was about to ask him (in Croatian) how long he had been in this country and if he enjoyed it, when the girl beside me, Olga Bannard, looked into my eyes doubtfully and said, 'May I have an olive?' I passed them and, noticing that my punch glass was full of a new draught of oblivion, emptied it.

This was not one of Haviland's professional dinners; there was not an actor or an actress present. Those parties were arranged in fealty to the leading lady of a Broadway musical comedy and were held on Saturday nights in secret cafés unknown to the layman. This little dinner was reminiscent rather of antique college days — three years gone, and of the year after, when Haviland worked in the U.T.C. branch office in New York, and when, as the bearer of his father's reputation, and his mother's face, he became a leader of cotillions. The girl with the bob of richly black hair, curled and centrifugal in the current mode, was a Minneapolis heiress. It was clear that he was in love with her for the evening. I listened, and talked, and drank from my punch glass, and a fine, substantial, contented, jolly world grew up in the room.

'What's Tuffy doing? . . . four thousand miles in a submarine . . . I'll make a little bet with you that we won't be scored against up to the Princeton game. . . . Tell me what the cake-eaters see in Vera Cunningham; she'll pet, but her face . . . so that I hate to recommend plays to any one . . . which was why we decided to go to Carcassonne . . . Nice is simply oozing rich fat Germans, and when I hear this poor Germany stuff . . . of course, I'm mad about it, but we couldn't get tickets . . . I'm telling you, it's the best show in town, Austin . . . I had the 'flu on the

way over . . . I ask you whose hand is this, anyway, it looks like a white hope . . . Jack is a bright kid, I've known him for a great many years, he plays a wonderful hand of bridge. The only trouble with Jack is . . . I think it was nothing to nothing, and a *moral victory* for Harvard . . . Four hours under water . . . Till some one said that Scott Fitzgerald was a Catholic!'

While I was listening and mingling with this, the waiters padding back and forth — and the punch glasses always emptying, and always full; while every one was talking in the way I have said, a rich world of youth arose and enveloped us. Irresponsible and conventional, buoyant, and secure; blood revolting and leaping over the surface of a river of wealth and respectability. I perceived this without effort and understood it. The world in which the dinner party swung arose an exhalation of memory and imagination, like the one I had felt around me at the marriage ceremony in Upham. An exhalation of the mind, but as substantial, as concrete as a sky-scraper.

'Franny Cromwell,' said one of the young men, 'had his head broken the other day, and has gone to the Presbyterian Hospital.'

'Frank Cromwell!' The three girls widened their eyes.

'A man hit him with a bar,' said the young man,

noticing that he had gained the attention of the table. 'Franny offered to fire on a locomotive during the strike — damn nervy thing to do — and on the second day when he went to work, a man went up to him and beaned him one.'

The girls drew long breaths through their lips.

'They ought to string up the whole lot,' said somebody.

'It's the agitators that are responsible,' said the young man. 'All they want is a revolution . . .'

'I don't see why they don't have a law,' cried one of the girls. 'We're supposed to be a civilized —— '

I should have thought more about this and the vague venom in the voices if I hadn't been talking so easily with the girl on my left. We found it possible very early to talk in telescoped sentences; to guess so much that the actual words became stepping-stones in a river of continuous thinking. And by this means, it is possible in three courses to travel a long way. The story of Franny Cromwell had proved an unwelcome interruption from which we both returned to ourselves with relief. She had an amazing faculty for dramatizing characters by a flavored word, and she had a way of listening to your story and by an exclamation or a glance even, or a special smile, stretch it far beyond your best imagination. Sometimes I lost my breath, she was so far ahead. The beauty of fair fine hair, and a fresh, an

almost tender complexion, grew in my mind as we talked; but at first, it was something intangible, a receptiveness of her nerves and mind that enwrapped me. Here was the sort of story she told. 'Last summer I was in Greece, traveling, and I met on the boat a little man who had come from Armenia. He was a Y.M.C.A. secretary — a funny weasely man, with pointed ears, and frightened corners to his mouth. I made him talk to me — and he did — the most uninteresting things — the town in Ohio where he was born — what was it? — and community sports — Oh! But I *knew* from the minute I saw him he had something to say.' And then she told me — through the words of the weasely man — the most ghastly story of blood and massacre I have ever heard. And it appeared that, driven to a fanatic effort by the killings he had seen, the man became a hero, and went through the Turkish lines with great hardship, to an encampment of Greeks — who attacked and broke the pogrom. Olga Bannard had certainly found out all the funniness and heroism possible in the man, and saved it for telling *now*, between the ice cream and the fruit of Haviland's dinner. Then we went to a roof and danced.

For days I thought the whole party over, but though I had enjoyed it extravagantly, I had a curious conviction that it marked the beginning of an estrangement with the world — the world which in-

cluded Haviland and the dinner guests and the pogrom story girl.

Nevertheless on the following Wednesday, I took Olga Bannard to tea.

Since Drinker had assumed leadership of the S.P.G., I found my arteries steaming with a wholly fresh energy, and whenever I thought of him or of the movement, my blood suddenly bathed me with a flood of loyalty and emotion I hardly knew what to do with. Inasmuch as he was starting to build or to 'pour' a new world into 'fresh moulds,' I set about writing a book to explain it. Until he sent me into 'the field' as he promised to do, it was necessary to find something to put my extra youth into. I had barrels and barrels of it ready to explode, and the duties of an editor weren't enough. In the first place, I had the 'Weekly' almost automatically organized; and in the second, if the 'Weekly' was to be confiscated for a larger cause, what was the use burning up imagination over it, as I had done? The book would be a light to my own mind, and to the world.

I set to work on the morning following the party with Haviland, and wrote down the title: 'Industrial Republics in the United States.' There were two steps which seemed to me as predictable as the appearance of the new moon. The first was the or-

ganizing of all the workers of all the great industries of the United States into trade unions. Drinker and the S.P.G. had assured that. It would be no more than hurrying along an historical destiny. The second was the 'winning of independence' by the workers from their employers. I intended to take the matter up industry by industry, how the new republic in one industry would be different from the new republic in another. And so I draughted quickly the first chapter. It was called 'The American Republic of Iron and Steel.' As a bridge-builder believes in his blue-prints, the writer of a Utopia must believe concretely in his prophecy if he would taste the most intoxicating delights of a radical imagination.

In this work, very much to my breathless astonishment I received early encouragement. Richard Hollis read the 'Steel Republic' and praised it till I blushed, asking me to bring it over to his home on one of his open-house Sunday nights. There would be all qualities, sizes, and colors of radicals there, and the thing could be 'torn to bits,' he said, 'with great profit by the savages.'

So I came the next Sunday, unhappy and conscious of the manuscript in my breeches pocket. There were two spots where radicals met to quarrel and to drink which I began to know intimately at about this time. One was Mullen's Restaurant,

where would be found, most any night, 'bona-fide labor leaders,' carpenters, plumbers, electrical workers, printers, and Jewish radicals from the clothing trade gathered there to mix with socialistic editors, politicians, and preachers. The other spot was Hollis's own house. Here the double net of Richard and Alice Hollis drew in artists, Congressmen, feminists, students, 'intellectuals,' anarchists, and socialist professors.

The Hollises' house was a two-story apartment, which on Sunday evening they communized completely and from bedroom to kitchen turned over to the will or ill-will of their guests. The apartment was luxurious and informal. All the comforts and accessories of civilization which Richard Hollis was able to move from his country home were there. (That country house had been abandoned by the Hollises when they 'went radical,' but not sold.) I found that I could pick out those elements of the jungle which had been chosen by Richard Hollis, and those chosen by his wife. In the main drawing-room there was an abundance of the best rugs, so many that the room looked like an exhibit; a thick beauty from Teheran was hung on the wall and by symbols told a Persian love story in the upper half and preached a Persian sermon in the lower. Mrs. Hollis had bought these herself, I guessed; she had an eye for the beauty of fabrics, and the other house, Miss

Reese told me, contained tapestries which if sold would endow the S.P.G. for a generation. Two rows of bookcases, with extra books on top, were, of course, Hollis's — a head master's library. And the little pile of letters, opened and thrown down on the library table where any one might read them, were his also. Upstairs in the study, the autographed photographs of Debs and Foster and a portrait of the martyr John Brown hung over Richard Hollis's desk, as well as a piece of an American flag carried by his father at Bull Run. But the machine gun in the front hall Mrs. Hollis had imported at great expense from Russia. It had been used in the Russian Revolution by the first Bolsheviki defending Petrograd against the attacks of Kerensky. A fragment of blood-stained clothing was framed above it. Around the other walls of the hallway hung old English hunting prints, which had belonged to her father.

When I arrived, at about ten o'clock, I found Croton and Mary Colquhoun and Drinker and Mahoney and Mr. and Mrs. Hollis in the kitchen, with about a dozen radicals unknown to me. Hollis was making a Welsh rabbit and opening bottles of beer. Miss Colquhoun had just refused a glass, and, looking at her over the top of my beer mug as she stood beside Richard, smiling at him and breaking eggs into the chafing-dish, I thought how queer it was that she was a prohibitionist! When she and Henry

were at their most anarchic, having abolished marriage, government and religion, she was still — so Miss Reese told me — a defender of prohibition. What a mosaic of consciences! Croton a pacifist member of the American Legion; Mary, free-love supporter of prohibition, and Bolshevik Mrs. Hollis, I had just learned, was a Roman Catholic.

After the beer and rabbit in the kitchen, the company broke all over the house and entered into the most various activities. Two or three ladies listened to a little lecture by Hollis over the early American woodcuts which he had hung in the bathroom. Mrs. Hollis talked polo to a British ex-officer from India, while a small group of professors, journalists, and members of the 'workers' party' discussed with prophetic enthusiasm the state of 'natural communism' in which the American aborigines of the Stone Age had grown up. I heard a victrola. It was playing post-War jazz in a mysterious back room into which I had seen the Harvard miner disappear. Then suddenly the shrieks of Miss Reese were audible above the orchestral music.

In the big drawing-room a half-dozen men and women sat on stools or chairs around Henry Clay, and listened to his words with solemn faces. Two very young girls sat at his feet and looked up into his eyes. Clay had been twisting his thin frame from side to side, as though he were in wretched pain, and

hunching his shoulders about his neck. Suddenly he stopped and clasped both hands before him, a foot or two from his chest, in an attitude of devotion.

'The State has no right to say what women I shall live with, or how many,' he said in a clear dry voice. He unclasped his fingers, and put them together again. 'My loves are no man's business,' he cried in a ringing tone, defiant and audible to both floors. I was shocked, shocked as I should have been had Saint Simeon Stylites shouted such words to the early Christians from his pillar in the desert.

Croton, observing what must have been a kind of solemn horror on my face, slid his arm through mine, and asked if I wouldn't join him in another bottle of beer. We sat on opposite sides of the kitchen table and laughed. Suddenly he looked across his second mug. 'Drinker is a wonderful radical,' he said firmly, 'brains, energy, everything!'

I agreed. I poured out my soul about Drinker.

'He has one fault,' he said, in a tone of thoughtful sadness, 'he is an *individualist!* Thinking only of himself. Nobody's work is important but his, unless,' he added, 'it fits into *the steel strike!*' I concealed my feelings. 'Well,' he said, rising with an agonized good humor, '*some day*, I will get to Russia. *Some day*, I will finish my book . . .'

We were all waiting till eleven o'clock when new guests would arrive — 'Hollis's politicians' — and

I was to read the 'Steel Republic' to every one who wasn't dancing or looking at prints or drinking in the kitchen. Meantime I wandered about with the utmost nervousness and misanthropy, later finding myself unaccountably caught in an intimate conversation with the Hollises. It seemed to me the subject before them had much better be discussed without me. I started to leave and twice Mrs. Hollis, by raising her eyes, prevented it.

She was arguing with her husband about Drinker's leadership in the S.P.G.

'He is using *all* the S.P.G. money for his coal propaganda and his steel propaganda . . .' she tore on.

Hollis remained impassive, his clear intellectual gaze resting on the muzzle of Trotsky's machine gun which shone under an electric bulb in the hall.

'And most of it is your money. *Our* money,' she added.

He turned his eyes upon her benevolently.

'His programme is *your* programme, my dear,' he said, '*much* more "revolutionary" than mine.'

For a moment I thought he had caught her. But she leaned toward him.

'I don't see that he is so *frightfully* radical,' she said. 'He clearly disapproves of you and Mary!'

The same thing happened to Richard Hollis's eyes as had happened when, way back, at our first meeting, I had referred to Mary Colquhoun as his wife.

There was the expression of arrested, blotted intelligence in his widened eyes. Then, he said: 'You think he does?'

My God, I groaned, what abomination is in the soul of Alice Hollis! She had fought with claws to push Hollis out of the leadership of the S.P.G. Now is she fighting to get him back? Or is this an elaborate and perverted jealousy of her husband's mistress which she won't admit to her conscious socialist self. She was inciting him against Drinker by saying that the latter disapproved of her husband's liaison! It was mad, it was perfectly ridiculous. It was also a damned outrage, I thought.

Drinker, I found playing cards alone in the dining-room.

'What's the strike news?'

'Not much,' he answered.

'Did Mr. Hollis go down?'

'Yes, he went down to Pennsylvania and spent a week.'

'Fine,' I answered, glowing.

'Dick went down, and spent a week and did nothing,' he said evenly. 'Hollis is the salt of the earth,' he added, looking at his cards, 'but you know how lazy he is. He thinks he is working when he is talking.'

I remembered with a pang the rich, leisured talks I had had with Richard Hollis in the midst of his

'busiest mornings.' But how full of strength and wisdom he had seemed to me! My mind turned to another subject. I came out with it.

'It seems to me funny about Mary,' I said. 'I wish Henry would leave her — or — or live with her.'

I had hoped that Drinker would help me out, and clear up the nauseous puzzle; he simply returned to his cards. But a few minutes later, I saw Mary talking to him, as he sat at the dining-room table quietly drinking a glass of beer. She was berating him for the beer, I saw; I couldn't hear, but I had no doubt she was calling him a libertine. I moved up because I thought it would be fun to hear him laugh and boisterously gibe back at her, as he often did with a boyish, hearty violence. Instead I saw him just look at her, with no thought — I could see that — of what she was saying to him.

That can't be, I whispered, and found myself unable to take my eyes away from his face. At last I dropped them in a deep shame and came away. The conviction by that time had rooted itself in me that Carl Drinker was in love with Mary Colquhoun! I couldn't be mistaken? Well? I had one single comfort in the matter. I was certain that nobody knew it but myself, and I would die, of course . . .

He presently gathered up his cards, and Mary Colquhoun left. Together we joined the little group

that was still listening to Henry Clay. I had no idea that he would be talking on his old theme.

'I insist,' the little man cried, spinning on the worn heels of his worn stubby little boots, 'that my wife has the right to sleep with any man.' Mrs. Hollis nodded vaguely. 'Any of you,' his eyes swept his hearers and rested on Drinker, 'have a right to ask her. But if the State —' he continued and lost himself in Hegel. Mrs. Hollis snapped the ashes from her cigarette, and Drinker asked if he might use the telephone. He paused in the doorway to light a cigarette; I saw him — through a haze — go through his pockets for a match. He couldn't find one, so I went across the floor and gave him a box. He broke three matches, but in the end lit the cigarette. I went back and Mrs. Hollis was alone with Clay.

'You *see*,' she was saying, 'he disapproves of Richard and Mary.' She nodded regretfully, letting the cigarette almost fall from her fingers. And I hated her.

At eleven-fifteen I read my 'Steel Republic' to nearly everybody, and although there was a lively discussion, it was more than clear that they absorbed the heart of the paper and took to it enthusiastically in the way Carl Drinker took to his beer.

'Possibly,' I thought as I walked home, 'I have been jumping to evil conclusions. Possibly they are

a generous lot with a few human frailties, but full of an ideal which must be known a long time to be appreciated.'

One morning in the offices of the S.P.G., I received an almost insupportable shock of delight. Drinker told me I was to go to the front. Which meant the steel country of Pennsylvania and Ohio. It seemed to me equally marvelous to be obeying Drinker in something and to be visiting again the steel country, whose grandeur and cruelty was still burning in my imagination. On the train I had that easy and unaccountable happiness that visits one on fortunate days and seems more an emanation of the blood than of the mind. Everything that met my senses heated into glamorous incandescence. I put my suitcase on the shelf above me, tossed it up; spread my newspaper carefully on my knees and, with a tiny spasm of pleasure, put my Pittsburgh ticket into the brass-lined crack of the seat before me. Then I began to imagine things about the people around me, especially about the man opposite — whose face expressed beyond any I have ever seen a magnificent concentration of character — But upon what? I never discovered. In the seat in front of the man was a girl of sixteen with a bright red complexion and eyes full of shyness and vitality. Only once did she look up from her book — that time

an eager, asking, but fearful glance thrown upon me.

And when I tired of the people around me, even the words of the newspaper seemed anxious to pirouette with ridiculous delight. I hardly cared for what they were saying, but rather for the feeling they made in my head, and the images which they opened up in my memory.

We passed through stretches of farm country, tenderly green under the breath of spring and the recent baths of April. Except where the black scars of a coal mine destroyed a hillside, or the steel began to gain on the farmer and cover his land with furnaces and mills. After a while agriculture retired into a few dirty gardens between furnaces and ore piles, and the land became irretrievably the Kingdom of Steel.

My task was to take funds which Drinker had raised by his eloquence to certain spots of desperation and distribute them amongst strikers. The last town I visited was a city of thirty thousand people, all given over to the making of steel. Five thousand men had been on strike for six months, and my assignment allowed me to leave a hundred dollars in the town. I couldn't, by taking thought, though I tried, add a single dollar to the stature of the gift, and I wanted to run away, but the relief committee met me at the station and said they had heard I was

bringing help and a five hundred dollar milk fund was imperative. I miserably gave the committee my hundred, talked a little, and went away, to gaze at a whole valley-full of steel furnaces that had been visible through the train window. Some were still at work. A nostalgia for the arduous and fierce life of mills and furnaces swept over me, and I watched breathlessly the ruddy gold smoke of a single Bessemer against the afternoon sky.

I remember that after my commission in the steel country was discharged, I bought my ticket for New York in a state of wretchedness. As I settled back in the smoking-car, my imagination conjured up the crowded offices of the S.P.G., and passed drearily to Mrs. Hollis's luxurious lair of revolution, and the loves and statistics of Henry Clay. Why in hell go back to them?

On that long ride from Pittsburgh to New York I sat all the way beside a square bronze-faced man whom at first sight I took to be a colonel in mufti. We fell into talk after a time and it developed that he was a mill superintendent. Not steel, though — copper. He was a college man, passionately devoted to football, so we discussed football, and then college and then men. And finally 'business' which meant steel and copper and brass. I found that he didn't 'blame' the steel strikers.

He asked me what I was doing.

'I'm looking for a job,' I lied.

'I'll give you one in the copper business,' he said, 'but you'd have to start at the bottom.'

'Copper isn't just my line,' I answered; 'I'm a journalist.'

But he gave me his card, as we drew into New York, and I kept it.

CHAPTER V

LOVE IS ENOUGH

Go and catch a falling star —
Get with child a mandrake root.

THIS I said to Olga Bannard walking at my side down Fifth Avenue, not as a command, but by way of reminding her she still had my copy of John Donne's poems.

'I dreamt I walked with some poor lover's ghost,
Who died before the God of Love was born,'

she answered, by way of showing that she understood and would return it to me when I took her home that night and while her mother made a cup of hot chocolate for us.

Her very lovely fair hair swept up on a wave from her forehead, dividing from a just perceptible part, and flowing into lesser waves and ripples all over her head. Her limbs had an air of frailty. It came, I am sure, from the nerves that governed her body. A sensitiveness or an intricate delicacy of perception — that she bestowed on everything — annoyed me at times, or frightened or delighted me, beyond measure. She was under the sway of the enthusiasms that swept through her, and her whole body, it seemed to me, trembled to abandon itself to any ec-

stasy the brain proposed. Olga Bannard's voice was lovely, refined and sweet. There were interior tones which made a suggestion of remote frontiers perfectly perceived, that good musicians give us from their instruments. But when she was not interested, especially when she talked with a person to whom she was indifferent, her body obtruded more, and was less obedient to her spirit. Her attempts to conceal indifference were an elaborate failure.

I liked her enormously, and she was as good as wine, for she took the ordinary thoughts of my brain and gave them such a glow that the succeeding ones leaped out quite freely, and became vivid and brilliant and immortal. At least I thought so.

'What lovely and terrible things he says about women — about the inconstancy of women,' she cried, with great gayety. 'I think he's the best of the inconstant women poets — you know — "she'll be false, ere I come, to two or three" — Oh!' — she cried, taking my arm, and leaning over it, with her eyes dancing into mine — and mine answering hers — 'I've a lot of new ideas about women — a first-rate theory in the first place as to why they aren't great. If they aren't. *Why* aren't they great?'

'Because they have children?' I answered. 'But they are.'

'I mean something fundamental — I've a theory ——'

'But ——'

'Yes, I know — it's been overemphasized. But the real trouble is psychological. My theory is this —— But you think they *are* great.'

'They use men,' I answered, 'to carry out what they want to get done. Just because they don't build bridges with the riveting hammer in their fingers is no proof they don't build bridges. Without women the captains and the kings and the engineers would all flop. They organize men and ——'

'Inspire them. Oh, how I hate the spiritual inspiration of women! How I *hate* it! I mean *great*, Harris. Like men. Great generals, great painters, great musicians, great scientists, great writers. There haven't been any really!'

'Oh, let's get historical for a minute. There was Sappho ——'

'If you mention Elizabeth Barrett, I'll scream ——'

'No, but Saint Teresa, and Joan of Arc.'

'Yes, there have been some, about a dozen. *Really* great women. But all through history; that's an awfully poor showing. And compared with the men.'

'But be anthropological ——'

She laughed.

'No, but for a half-dozen ages women were kept in their proper place, the way they are in Germany today. And made to do all the work, and be slaves and

houris; while men fought wars, wrote poems, and invented God.'

'Yes, but for centuries there've been thousands and thousands of women who have been thinking and painting and——'

'Only a few ——'

'Shh — And there hasn't been an absolutely first-rate — you know that — painter, or ——'

'Yes, that's true.'

'Well, the trouble is they have simply imitated men — you see the men have spread themselves out over the world, and filled it up with masculine bridges, masculine symphonies, and —— Women are really profoundly original but ——'

'You would have feminine time-tables, and a lady's Euclid?'

'Oh!' she exploded in a burst of disgust and appreciation. 'No, this is my theory, and I'm sure I'm right. Women are afraid — they are afraid of being laughed at — but when they get over that they will go into professions with a more special complicated fervor just because they are women — and create with a new, fresh, and feminine genius. Then they will be seen to be great. For the greatness that is buried at the bottom of their bodies and minds will have got out — into work.'

'Fine!' I cried, with a great deal of real admiration. 'Go on.' And as she went on, I thought that

her voice and eyes were curiously alike, and what an odd idea that was; I also thought of the things I would put into words when she finished speaking. But chiefly I started an inquiry which began: Why don't I marry this girl?

No, I have never known any one half so well, or liked any one a quarter as much. I love her eyes and her voice — and together there is a sort of flame —

'The women who could are often so blind,' she was saying. 'I wonder why.'

'Because they like to get married,' I said.

'Oh,' she cried angrily, '*that's true.*'

We went to the movies together, and to Gilbert and Sullivan, and to dance at the Blue Bird and the Pig's Whistle and the Umbrella's Handle, and all the other underground pseudo-Bohemian absurdities below Fourteenth Street, and once or twice to the Plaza. And to supper in her boarding-house hotel, and to lunch at Childs', and May's, and Anne's, and all those other places which are kept by women with first names only. She took a course in playwriting at Columbia, and I sat in the back row and walked home with her afterward. We rode immense distances on the top of buses and went to 'little theaters,' eating cornflakes in dirty restaurants after midnight. We discussed poetry a good deal, Matthew Arnold, Keats, Shelley, and Francis Thompson, and John Donne, especially Donne. I talked about the

S.P.G., W. Z. Foster, Lenin, the Spartacists, the triple alliance of trade-unionists in England, Guild Socialism, the Steel Strike, and the Communist Party of America. She would listen to all this, and glorify it by her enthusiasm.

But chiefly she had an insatiable appetite for character. She sketched for me an amazing hierarchy of uncles and cousins, who came out of her mouth like figures of Dickens and Meredith. And she made me tell all the persons of the S.P.G. I gave her my best radical and my worst, I gave her guild socialists who were like English curates, and an I.W.W. organizer who was like Wesley.

But one day we had lunch with a number of cousins of hers and a one-hundred-per-cent banker from Chicago. She took no interest in any of the conversation, and recalled herself from a dreamy preoccupation only by sudden intense and empty replies to questions she hadn't understood. I thought both the cousins and the banker were not half bad, but she took no interest in either of them for their own sake or as specimens.

Halfway through the fish, she said to me under her breath, 'I don't like his mouth.'

Afterward she said 'Oh' in a way that would have made any banker with a grain of self-respect shoot himself through the brain.

'My dear, did you see the way he shoveled in

those potatoes?' I tried to remember and recalled the potatoes in something of a fog. It was vulgar, what I could remember of it. I said 'Yes.' She laughed in a way that made me laugh too. It was a laugh which excluded the Chicago man from the group of the civilized.

One day I told her the story of the steel mills, and my Italian and Slav fellow workers on blast furnaces.

'We used to go inside the blast stoves to clean out the flue dust,' I said. 'It is the dirtiest job I know and done when the gas flames have only been dead a little while; the "stove" stays hot. We'd wrap canvas bags around our feet and legs, and tie handkerchiefs over our noses. Three or four minutes was the most you could work, poking out dust between "brick checkers" with an iron rod; gas and flame getting into your nose. We had an Austrian on our gang, I remember, who was getting old. He went down into the stove one Monday morning and came up in a minute spitting. The regulation turn was to "poke out" four holes in the checker-work, before coming up for breath. He'd poked one.

'He stood at the top of the ladder and looked around at the rest of us.

'"When I go down," he said, his voice breaking, "I want poke 'em some good, I no can poke 'em today ——"

'He was fifty-two years old. Everybody looked at him and nodded. He lost his job the next day.'

When I told Olga this, she said, 'Oh, *Harris!*'

She got it too. But if she had been there on top of the blast stove? He was so disgusting — an old man covered with flue dust with his nose running — spitting through his teeth. Would she have listened if she had been on top of the blast stove? I don't know.

We loved life together. I felt her tremble in an ecstasy of physical excitement at a football match, and laugh herself exhausted over the jokes we told each other in the flat. We chased one another round the roof of the sky-scraper where she lived, and solemnly counted the lights coming out in the Woolworth Tower. And one day we lay on our backs, looked up at the stars and asked ourselves if we believed in immortality. And if so, what kind?

She called for me one day at the S.P.G., coming out of the elevator in a glow of curiosity and receptiveness. Here would be organized socialism! And red adventure!

I took her into the library, and we ran into Heard coming out with a great handful of carbon copies of his last speech in one hand, a pencil in his teeth, and two volumes of Veblen under his arm. He manipulated them beautifully and shook hands, sliding the carbons onto a library table.

'Harris has spoken of you,' he said. 'And I al-

ways hear him calling you on the telephone, and I listen,' he added, smiling broadly, and drawing up chairs about a table heaped high with pamphlets on the German revolution.

'I've always wanted to come here,' she said, and looked a list of questions.

Heard obliged her and told everything imaginable about what the S.P.G. was and what it hoped to be. He was a little unctuous but interesting, and answered all her half-asked questions just the way she would have liked if she had really asked them.

They exhausted the S.P.G. after a while, and swung out on a long tack into the comedy of manners and thence into essays and essay-writing. It all happened through an expression that Heard had used from the 'Way of the World.'

'It is so much harder to write,' said she, 'if you haven't a regular literary job to hold you at it. I would so like to be in an editorial office; there would be all the people you meet too. Don't you think it's harder if you just live at home?'

'Would you like a job in an editorial office?' said Heard abruptly.

'Oh!' said Olga, 'yes.'

'I know a job, copy-reader, and sort of editorial assistant, "Weekly Review," man's left, and may want a girl now. A good place to learn, you'd meet everybody.'

I looked at Olga's face. A curious mixture of pain and bewilderment had come into it. Then, suddenly, she looked for an instant terror-stricken, and I thought she had it in her mind to fly out of the room and down all sixteen flights of stairs. And after that she looked quite simply as if she was going to cry.

'I'm going down there this afternoon, and glad to have you go with me, if you'd care to,' said Heard.

She rallied suddenly at this, and said:

'It's awfully kind of you, but I couldn't possibly go this afternoon; I have two appointments filling up the whole afternoon.' Which was a lie; she was going to the movies with me.

'But some other time, perhaps; it sounds very wonderful!'

Her voice was perfectly false now, and she was smiling ardently. It was exactly the way she had spoken and smiled at the dinner with those cousins and the banker from Chicago.

'I couldn't possibly leave mother for a job,' she said afterwards to me on Twenty-Third Street.

'Of course you couldn't,' I said. I suppose, I put it to myself, that the world has more reality and color if it comes to a woman through the eyes of lover or husband than if it comes through her own. Still, there are girls, I thought, who take things raw, without salt!

I stopped for a few minutes at the Bannards' the night of the next rendezvous at the Hollis home. A number of matters of the first importance were to be reviewed, of which I recall but one — the third and critical chapter of my Republics book was up for reading. And for that two bona-fide American Communists — 'who took their orders from Moscow' — had been invited to furnish, as Hollis said, 'a provocative opposition.'

Olga had led me to expect that her mother would leave early for bridge and I counted on it heavily. Bridge versus Communism, I said to myself. The part which Mrs. Bannard played in my relations with Olga Bannard was a curious one. She was a widow of the older and stricter Philadelphia faith, tall with a slender and beautiful waist like her daughter's. She had a gentle charm, but, as my aunt used to say, her tongue could turn over. Aggressively without religion, there was a Puritan sinew in her that twined itself into her social prejudices. The root difficulty was that she began by liking me — and does still, I think — taking me, so to speak, on good faith as an eligible young man. As 'eligible' as any. It was no secret that she intended to keep Olga unmarried, and beside her the rest of her life. But despite that — which is perhaps no more than the half resolve of thousands of lonely mothers — she liked me and was willing enough for her daughter

to have me to dinner. Till in the end, she learned, vaguely and most inaccurately, you may be sure, from Mrs. Hollis, whom she had once known, that I was 'betraying my class.' Without stopping — I think in fact in some terror that she *might* stop — to understand, she became hostile. Her tactics were not to prohibit — the evidence was too slender — but she began to obstruct my friendship with her daughter. An odd flavor was given to this enmity by the fact that she was getting to like me better and better as each hostile interview succeeded the last. It might be supposed that I would thereupon have counted on winning her in the end by the baffling force of my charm. But I had no illusions. It was apparent that the more agreeable I became the more dangerous I grew as a social iconoclast — to herself and her daughter. I discovered that her Puritan instincts helped her mightily in this rôle of protectress which was clearly distasteful personally. For her the getting rid of me became, in fact and fatally enough, a matter of conscience.

The evening of the radicals' rendezvous I saw Olga for the first time in four days, and teeming as I felt myself with personal communications I wanted to see her alone. At eight o'clock the three of us sat down to drink coffee in the spacious 'library' in the Bannard apartment. . . . At ten we rose. It isn't necessary to set down everything that happened in the

long and hostile hours between. Had Mrs. Bannard gone out to her bridge club, I should have lingered *not over* fifteen minutes, I believe, with Olga — and gone on eagerly to my battle with the Communists.

At quarter past eight Olga said to her mother: 'You had better take a taxi, Mud, and not try to walk.' She answered that she had a severe headache and had given up all thought of bridge for the evening. (The words had the emotional content of 'forever.') At nine o'clock Mrs. Bannard remembered, 'I thought you had a meeting at half-past eight.' I answered in a stricken voice that it was too late now, and then, wittily, that the meeting was for the purpose of hatching Bolshevism, and that the world would thereby be the safer for my remaining where I was. At nine-thirty Olga, unweakened, asked if she couldn't come and rub her mother's head — *after she had gone to bed.* Mrs. Bannard asserted that her headache was 'lifting.' . . . The long battle wore on. At ten o'clock Olga sprang up with a little cry and said: 'There is a full moon. Let's say goodnight to it, Harris, before you go!' Without a look at her mother, she fled up the ladder stairs which led from the hallway to the cold darkness of the roof. I thought vaguely how I would apologize and follow when Mrs. Bannard called at my back, 'Will you hold these furs?' We went up the stairs together,

Mrs. Bannard mounting grimly without my support. The stupidity of the 'old woman' — I was calling her that — was phenomenal, as I think it over. If she had left us alone, we should literally have said good-night to the moon, and have parted with very little more spoken to each other. Olga had indeed intimated my leave-taking, '. . . before you go,' she had said. Indeed, had her mother's conscience not driven her — I was about to say nothing might have happened. But that is assuming an omniscience I never had on the roof and haven't acquired in the years that have followed.

Olga was standing at the edge of the roof, where a wall of brick, the façade of the building built upward, threw her body into profound shadow. The moon was low and the wall high enough to extend darkness twenty feet from the wall. It was a rich pool of liquid darkness from which Olga twisted toward us, holding on to the wall with her hand; the moon fell sharply on her cheek and one shoulder, so that she looked like a swimmer raising herself from black waves which swept over her, opaque and dense. 'I have a new constellation,' she shouted, 'a New York one.' I knew what that was; she meant that a new building or regiment of buildings had begun to put out their lights since she looked last, forming an original pattern upon the night sky. This was an event, which as students of the constellations of New

York we had celebrated before. 'Will you look there!' she commanded. I left her mother standing in bewildered silence at the head of the stair ladder, and rushed into the waves. Standing at the cold brick wall that rose to our waists, I felt her move against me, and at the same time point with her arm — the one away from me — into the forest of lights. She didn't look at my face. 'The triangle is new,' I said, 'but that tower with the bright windows was always there.' I held my eyes steadily on the tangle of lights downtown, but after a little I could see no longer. They became an aching glimmer and I looked down at the cape on Olga's shoulders. Mrs. Bannard was walking about on the broad platform near the stairs. Then I remember that I put my fingers on Olga's arm under the cape and that she turned to me, or perhaps I turned her. I took her other arm in my fingers, and a tremor, delicate and little, that shook her like a somewhat sudden breath-taking, passed into me. I kept my body still.

She looked up at me, raising her chin, raising her chin — slowly —

I don't know whether Mrs. Bannard had waited for us a patient hour, or whether it was a minute after I had heard her walking on the boards by the stair ladder. She spoke in an irritated voice that had real shivers in it from the cold. That is all there was, I

suppose. I reasoned it out. All there was in her voice; but to me, standing by Olga, the voice was in another spatial dimension — away off somewhere — a hierarchy of planets away. At the same time, it occurred to me that it was unreal, a startled memory, a nerve unfortunately, inappropriately twanging into recollection. Then I heard her acutely and knew where I was. I put my fingers on top of the wall. She was saying: 'It is dangerous for you to stay in this air any longer, with that light cape. And I am chattering with the cold.'

I looked down at the cool brick and studied it, finding my mind clear and working helpfully. I thought: Mrs. Bannard will undoubtedly freeze if she stays on the roof. After a while, she will realize it and go downstairs. While I was turning over this reasoning in my mind and finding it quite sound, Olga had turned to the shivering woman.

'Go downstairs, Mother, or you *will* take cold. Go!'

I was pleased at the words and smiled a little, but it didn't surprise me. It seemed perfectly reasonable.

For a minute nearly, Mrs. Bannard was speechless. I imagined with satisfaction the silent and really terrible furor in her brain. Then she said with an over-buoyant calm, — indicating weakness:

'I want you and Harris to go where it is *warm*.' She began to walk about and beat her arms against

her body. I couldn't but admire her fortitude. There were other words less calm, and less decisive, 'pneumonia,' I think, and 'cape.' But I thought the back of the enemy was now broken. Olga was looking out at the triangle of lights. The minutes passed.

'I hope she doesn't get cold,' she murmured, but gave no augury of obedience and no sign of speaking to her mother again. Finally I heard Mrs. Bannard's foot on the stair. 'It is over,' I meditated. But Mrs. Bannard was speaking again: 'I shall go down and get your mink, Olga,' she shouted convincingly — and muffled words arising from the ladder sounded like 'cape' and 'pneumonia.'

It surprised me when I thought of it later, but in a minute — not more — I had forgotten Mrs. Bannard. I looked at Olga again and told her I loved her. She gave a sob and I kissed her weeping. In that first kiss, she sank against my body, with only her lips, I thought, asking for me, and then slowly, with trembling and with slow passion, her hands on my shoulders, around my neck, and on my hips. Our bodies became each other, and I kissed her innumerable times. When we came to go downstairs, we found the mink cape hung on the railing, around the top of the stairs.

Mrs. Bannard was sick for a week after the 'pneumonia courtship,' as she happily phrased it, but after

that she accepted me; even with enthusiasm suppressed but audible. During those days in bed she had adjusted her conscience to the situation. I was uncertain upon the conditions of her new contract with herself, but my imagination suggested alternatives. Either I was to be redeemed by kindness into the Philadelphian faith, or put out of the way before the finality of marriage. I could conceive no third way. But meantime she gave herself the sensible pleasure of enjoying my company, and I had every privilege. Her absence or her presence, to begin with, at Olga's nod, the use of the drawing-room, the kitchen, the library, at any hour of the twenty-four, the Hudson estate, the apartment roof and the stars.

To me my life appeared every morning, every evening, an inexhaustible and accelerating miracle. And it proved a hardy miracle too. The old world of two weeks ago yesterday, which had seemed so exciting, so 'revolutionary,' so new, was an ashen memory; compare it, say, with the last half-hour in which I had walked home — accompanied only by my happiness — to the tenement. The days before Olga, the years before Olga, had not been dull, judged by any reasonable standard. Ante Olga. Post Olga. The difference between the two ages was that though the first had absorbing stretches they were reached only after meaningless marches of a

tough resistant drudgery. Much of living also — I noticed this in retrospect — had been unrelated utterly to much other living. Life had been centrifugal, flying off meaningless in all directions. Now all its parts were together, and there was light between and behind them; it was a stream with friends, duties, and enemies, the S.P.G., and Haviland's tweed coat all in it, in the stream somewhere, amongst clear sunlight, but appearing at different depths. I was crazy to be sitting with and watching Olga, but that was less needful to me than I had thought. Her love spread out over the whole day, over the earth settling upon it, not missing the smallest corner. It seemed to make my ambition for Drinker more imperative and more masterful — and it made proof-reading and make-up, which had begun to gray out, new. In loving Olga, I fell in love with the tenement and the S.P.G., sleeping and food, the stenciling-machine, Miss Reese, the streets of New York, with all my memories, and with the fortunate future of mankind.

In the two weeks following my engagement, we began to tell each other systematically about ourselves. I had never been in love before — nor had she — so that it was a surprising business. It was surprising to find how profoundly she knew my bad qualities — there were several to which she objected

— that I had always considered wicked, but charming. She did not think them charming. She described me one day.

'You are earnest, exciting, and absorbed,' she said, 'and when you are carrying somebody else with you, it is exciting for both of you. Say for you and me, Harris. But when you're not — it's different, much different. You love a great many kinds of things, but your energy is betraying you all the time, in doing more than you have any right to. You have a curiosity about some things that drives you on frantically to find out about them, but you let people fool you and every day you pass by true, beautiful things that most people see. You walk into the bottom of my heart, but you don't notice anything, going there. You're awfully blind, dear. I love you.'

CHAPTER VI

REVOLUTIONS — RED AND WHITE

After those first days of prolonged confession I found — and it was the first slight shock to my love — that I was telling Olga less and less of the haloed drudgery of every-day. We talked — it is hard somehow to remember this period — about our friends, or sat silent and motionless — when we were not in each other's arms — or entered into vague, sometimes into detailed prospectuses of married life. The date for the wedding had been inevitably pushed a year into the future — partly from my crying poverty and partly because of a formidable buttress of delays insisted upon by her mother. I maintained friendly relations with the Burnham clan but neither received nor desired monetary aid from that quarter. One dominating theme of our talk was the way and means of annihilating procrastination — which being translated was the annihilation of Mrs. Bannard.

All of this seems natural enough, but it troubled me that, besides expressing our sheer love and our necessary plans, I was unable to share with Olga the large adventure of my days with Drinker and the S.P.G. Since the depth and value of what I did

daily, its light and meaning, were due to *her*, it seemed a mean thing that I couldn't share it. Here was the author of the meaning and desperate beauty of life — and she was not knowing or enjoying it. But Olga, when I told her about this, assured me she had satisfactory private miracles of her own.

One morning around six o'clock, I shook myself out of an oppressive dream and threw my body on one side of the bed, with a hand reached out toward the alarm-clock. One of those pangs of anxiety that are almost a strain of fear was shooting through my heart, and I studied the face of the clock fiercely for several seconds. I was convinced that I had a shift in the Bethlehem steel mill before me and that I was missing it. That I should be an hour or more late before I could reach the high green gate that led into the mill, and the time-clock beside it. That I should be too ashamed to go in at that hour and face the furnace melter. That I should lose a day and a day's pay, and still further incur the anger of the open-hearth boss, who hated me. I thought of all that in an instant — or rather I lived through the fear of it all in that instant. And mixed with everything else was the numb dread of pushing sleep-soaked limbs through another twelve hours' labor. The half-hope that I was late, too late for it altogether.

Then the fingers of my hand relaxed their wound-

ing grip on the clock. I smiled. I smiled the infinitely comfortable smile of the man who finds none of the horrible facts he has been conjuring true, but finds that God is granting him another hour in bed.

Nearly two hours later, after that delicious and comfortable half-sleep of late morning, I awoke with an easy assurance and no fears. The comparative spaciousness of my tenement room, with its adequate furnishings — its bureaus, desk, its electric lights — I looked at with singular pleasure. Sitting in pajamas on the edge of my bed, I could see, through one of my two windows, a moving clothesline. At one end of it was the face of Paula, the negress cook, putting clean sheets and tablecloths on the line, and then pulling them out by a rope into the sunny spaciousness of the courtyard.

If this had been last year in Pittsburgh, the soot would be settling on them, I thought. And as I put on my clothes I kept meeting in my mind and nerves the queer differences between me then and me now. I felt both homesick and relieved. As I put on my garters, I remembered that a hot-blast man never wore any. I recalled getting out of bed in the room of the company house and hastily slipping woolen socks over blistered feet. Furnace-workers wore woolen ones to shield off the heat and to soak up sweat. I smiled at the clean white underwear draped over a chair in front of me. There was another con-

trast with the mill. We wore woolen underdrawers and undershirts. Going from temperatures of over a hundred and fifty down to sixty you had to. Some of them were made of black cloth. The wool cut off the heat when you slipped close to a blazing furnace door. It was funny, to take such a pleasure in smooth artificial-silk socks, neatly held round the leg by a garter. I moved my toes inside them and walked around the floor.

I understood why machinists bought silk shirts with their bonus money during the War. Civilization is a funny thing.

I slipped on some low brown shoes. Heat and standing about wore out your soles in about two weeks. Then you took your shoes to a cobbler. Army field-boots were what I used. As to shaving — we shaved about once a week: the fancy boys twice.

All this seemed the least part of the differences of men. I was to marry Olga, other men were not. But given enough years — with two shirts a month, clothes make the man. I've often thought the advertisement was true . . . Teufelsdröckh!

I thought of a number of other things as I dressed and washed and moved Haviland's shoes from my brief-case.

Fatigue, for instance, which makes workmen walk the way they do after working a ten-hour day,

and makes them think differently about themselves, and their jobs, and the President of the United States. There was the feeling I had when I went home through the green gate and left the blast furnace behind for twelve hours. The most important things in the world, I used to think, were eating and sitting down. Every man going home carried a rock on his back, the fatigue of twelve hours' labor. He cared about putting that rock down before he cared about anything else. I remember how surprised I was at clerical work the first week — able to walk all the evening without pain.

In the next few weeks, I experienced a terrible foreboding that the S.P.G. and the unknown future to which it pointed would in the end divide Olga from me. When I told her about it, she laughed, but I began to feel for the first time that in going to the S.P.G. offices, I was going away from her, that in being loyal to Drinker I was denying her love. All this time she was constant in the assurance that she would take me in any station of poverty or Bolshevism to which my madness called me. But I was afraid of the dividing fires of an unknown future.

One Saturday I went to Haviland's club to meet him for lunch and sat waiting a long time in the lobby. An odd feeling of expectancy was on me as if something fatal and decisive was about to happen. I studied the lobby idly. Most of the men who hur-

ried through to the coat-room, or stood about it talking with each other and smoking, were young men between twenty-three and thirty-five. A man walked out of the elevator very quickly. A man about thirty with an expression on his face of having too many appointments. He hesitated for a minute in front of the elevator, and his face registered an elaborate mental calculation. He had a white, flexible face that was sensitive and hard at the same time. Somebody saw him while he waited in front of the elevator poised, so to speak, to spring to the front door. The second man stepped in front and cut him off. He was a youngster with a great loose overcoat, and a handsome, reckless face, trying to look business-like. The man by the elevator had already started for the door and arrested his flight so quickly that he swung round on the ball of his foot when he shook hands. I couldn't hear what they said to each other, but the older man smiled on and off with automatic celerity and shook hands twice. He walked along with his hand still moving up and down inside the youngster's, and spoke very rapidly, showing his teeth and snapping his head from side to side. The man in the loose coat tried to head him off by getting in front of him. But he couldn't do it, and they broke at the door. When the youngster turned round, I fancied his lips were saying, 'You son of a bitch,' but perhaps I was mistaken.

A man came in in plus-fours, and stood in a comical slouch in front of the doorkeeper. I remembered the man; he had played football at Yale in 1915. He threw a bag of golf-sticks toward the startled doorman and said: 'Don't let me see them again!'

'I don't like golf,' he explained, taking the lobby into his confidence. 'One hundred and five and four lost balls.'

I waited till two-fifteen. Haviland, I concluded, had characteristically forgotten his appointment, and I went slowly back to the tenement, making up taunts against his 'artist's' temperament as I walked.

In the late afternoon I climbed onto the tenement roof. There was a little mist in the air, blown in from the sea, and the melting sun set it on fire. The brick cliffs of New York looked as though they were caught in a holocaust. . . . I thought it a terrifying sunset, a Götterdämmerung of brick and stone. Then I relived with all my might the most terrible night beauty I had ever seen: a phalanx of steel-mill furnaces pouring into giant ladles their rivers of white light. Hardy and swift and dangerous. They splatter, I thought, like devil's cream, and kill anything they touch.

I remembered the first night I worked as a common laborer in the slag pit of the furnaces; the surprising beauty of it swept into my eyes as if the

molten metal itself went into my brain. One furnace poured into the pit a gorgeous deluge of fire before they could catch it in any ladle, and it ran after us over the pit floor till it sank into dark pools of dying heat. When they stripped the ingots and took off the black armor of moulds, the night crackled till the ingots swung away into the darkness on flatcars. Adjoining the open-hearth area, a battalion of Bessemer furnaces threw off from their egg-shaped bodies clouds of smoke which were rusty and red and whitish and gold.

All this, I said to myself, looking down at the tin roof of the tenement, I saw clearly and wonderfully upon the first night that I worked in the steel mill. But after that I never saw it again. Nor did any of the Hunkies who worked with me or any of the bosses who worked over me.

I went down into my room and brought up a time-table.

There was a train which left for Bethlehem some time around midnight. I saw myself the next morning at nine o'clock buying corduroy pants and army field-shoes at a second-hand shop I knew near one of the rolling mills.

I could strip myself then, and go to work. I could strip my soft underwear and put on the heavy woolens which I had worn before, that soak up the sweat. I could strip off the artificial-silk socks — I laughed

as I moved my toes inside my polished low shoes. The laugh didn't prevent me from clenching my fists, though. I would strip myself of a good digestion and an uninjured body . . . of respectability; I would take off that waistcoat. And I would strip off the overcoat of comfortable conversations. And everything else that got between me and suffering.

'The goddamdest part of it,' I said out loud, drumming my feet on the tin roof, 'is that these Hunkies and I can't see things, or hear them, or think them — not because our eyes or our ears or our brains are different from my classmate's, but because our bodies have been working too many night shifts too long.'

There ought not to be any prizes in heaven, I said to myself, for feeding white-faced children. Let God give Gary and Guggenheim and Lord Birkenhead a Sunday-School button for all their gifts to charity, then put His attention on the crime of stamping out a man's mind.

I found a telegram on my bed when I climbed down the ladder from the roof to my room. It said:

> Arrive in New York Sunday. Can you dine with me Hotel Gotham seven-thirty ?
>
> MYRA NETTLETON

An aunt who lived in Philadelphia. She would come filled with affectionate concern and all the

scandal of Philadelphia. I can't possibly dine with her to-morrow night, because I have to go to a meeting of Red architects who are proposing to establish Guild Socialism at once in the building trades of New York. I don't think I'll see her at all. I can't be bothered with aunts filled with Philadelphia gossip. I'll go to tea with her, and break away in time for the Red architects. Yes. They are at Fourteenth Street and Sixth, and, eating at seven — the Gotham is . . . I know about where the Gotham is — I can make it all right.

I did. I arrived in the Gotham to look for Aunt Myra at four-forty-five. But she hadn't come in yet. I sat down in the lobby of the Gotham in one of those vast leather-covered chairs that look as if they were built in that manner to discourage guests from carrying them off. I can think of no other reason for their bulk and discomfort. Sitting in one of these I found some one standing near the register, looking fixedly at my face. It was Mr. Dulles, the father of a boy I had played with through all my boyhood. I was very much surprised to see him, not supposing that he ever came to New York at all — and I jumped up and halfway across the lobby to meet him.

He advanced slowly, with a great deal of corpulence and dignity.

'I'm glad to see you,' I said.

He shook hands in a little the non-committal way of the man at Haviland's club.

'Well,' he said, 'we hear a great deal about you, but we don't know very much,' and he laughed, with a good deal of voice and, I thought, no heartiness whatever.

'We hear first one thing and then another,' he continued, making my hand go in a rotary motion by twisting it at the wrist.

'Believe everything you hear,' I answered. 'It's all true.'

'It's all true?' He hiccoughed. 'Well, what are you now, a Bolshevik or just plain Socialist!' He laughed at this, noisily and long. 'I'm going back to Upham this afternoon. Any messages?'

I was about to give him one, but he had already shaken hands again and departed.

I sat for an hour over the tea-table with Aunt Myra.

'You know,' she said at the end of the third cup, and following her own thoughts rather than any lead I had given her, 'the one thing people can never forgive in one is a betrayal of one's class.'

'Yes.'

'It might be better,' I said to myself in the taxi later, 'to enlist in Trotsky's cavalry. I hate insinuations ——'

As the taxi went on I thought — It's not so much

the question, How am I going to strip myself of the inconveniences of class that I may serve the movement, as how soon and how much are people going to strip me?

I decided that I should go to see Olga for a little and tell her about the sunset, with all its burning memories of steel. Indeed, there was no fighting the *necessity* of seeing Olga; the architects' revolution could wait.

She was alone. 'I want to talk about open-hearth furnaces, Olga,' I began, 'and me.' She smiled and put a hand over mine. I thought back, a little desperately, to the vivid vision I had caught from the afternoon sky. I tried to recreate the excitement of it and the beauty. When I finished, I was tired and it came over me that I had failed. I looked at the floor and took my hand away. I had made a play out of it, I thought, shuddering, and *translated* it. Which was really disloyal. Then I thought how I should tell it truer. I went back in my memories to see how I could. But there was nothing left in my head but the *translation*. What was making a liar of me? I thought.

For a little while after that, we talked affectionately and sensibly about plans, but it seemed to me a very terrible thing which I had done — or which she had done.

I looked at her. She sat with the incomparable

dignity of her lifted chin and those quiet hands in her lap. I came over and put my arms about her knees. I believe if I had stayed longer I should have died, for I couldn't breathe.

The Red meeting was held on the eighteenth story in the rooms of the Architects' Club. Both the president and the secretary of the club were Socialists and this was an informal gathering of friends to talk over a proposed revolution (peaceful if possible) in the building trades of America.

After dinner, we went into the main room of the club, which was long and narrow, with a table toward one end of it. Its walls were covered with engravings of old members — all Yankee Puritan faces, hard as nails and looking like Calvinist parsons who had become contractors.

The room was dimly lighted, from a fireplace at one end and a single unshaded electric bulb at the other. I sat studying a Jewish face near the mantel, and, as far as the firelight let me observe it, it seemed to me an unusually handsome and sensitive one. The nose was of the straight Jewish type; the eyes had marks of pain about them which I could see even in the half-light; the chin was firm under its beard of light gold. It came to me suddenly that it was the face of Jesus Christ. Any of the masters might have picked the man for a model, I mused.

Perhaps it is true that all Jews who are young and fair and who wear their beards that way are potential models for Our Lord. For the painters were not so much picking an unusual type as a pure and refined one. There was the suffering droop of the eyelids. The effect of the man's expression upon me was profoundly one of recognition and pity.

I had but a minute or two to speculate or to look at him, for he got up suddenly with a funny spring and walked over to seat himself on the leather cushion beside me. I saw when he stood up that he was very short, not over five feet four, and that he walked nervously, almost giddily, to the settle. For a few seconds he sat taut, with his body stretched forward, his chin on his knuckles and his eyes fixed on the fire. Then he fell back slowly and turned his face to me.

'I ought not to be here,' he said, turning his face back to the fire.

I didn't know how to answer this personal confession. There was so much intensity, even bitterness, in his voice that I hardly knew whether to ask a further question or condole with his condition unexplained.

'Besides,' he murmured, after a few seconds, 'I'm really not safe here.' He waited and looked into the fire again. 'Not that I suspect any one here,' he began once more. 'They are probably all

good comrades. Many of them have suffered too. I know many of them who *have* suffered.' He waited nearly a minute. 'I have been studying that design over the fireplace,' he resumed, turning and facing me squarely — 'those scrolls. I used to do that sort of work — studied it out myself at odd times.'

'What sort of ——?'

'Do I look white? I've been out of prison only three months. Three years in Leavenworth as a conscientious objector. But before that, two years — for rioting, inciting to violence, and striking the police. It was just after I joined the movement — I've been in the movement only five years. Three weeks after I joined, I think it was — yes, three weeks. I was making a speech in the big machinists' strike in Bridgeport. I forget what I said to them. It was a message of hope. . . . I am unable to conceive of anything more awful than staying in prison for another spring. Oh, God, it has been five years since I have been out on the earth in April or May . . .' He turned his face toward the fire, and startled me again with that look of the portraits of Jesus. 'I shall miss being beaten, for I am beaten in whatever prison I go,' he continued. 'I started going to a reformatory school when I was ten years old, for stealing from telephone boxes. I was beaten for trying to escape. They put the boys over German horses and lashed them with leather straps.

They tied you on this way.' He stood up and bent his back over, letting his hands fall loosely over a chair. 'Fixing your hands and feet with buckles. The blood ran into your underclothes and down into your boots. . . . There was a warden in my second prison who knocked me down and broke a stick about my face because I wouldn't — I forget what he asked me — I forget what I wouldn't ——'

The man was standing in front of me, twisting his arms with his fingers interlaced, his lips trembling and the whole cast of his face grown bestial. His eyes were filled with a recollected fear, and his mouth showed the rending teeth above his lower lip like a dog's.

'When did you come to New York?' I asked, in a frantic effort to break into his memories.

He looked at me vacantly for a moment, poised between those two states of mind. I hesitate to put down 'between the bestial and the human,' because that has the sound of a phrase. But he looked like an animal to me. The president of the Architects' Club was drumming with his pipe on the table under the electric light, smiling and saying in a rich voice: 'Shall we begin our deliberations?'

'I shall have to go to the toilet,' said the little Jew to me in a ridiculously confiding whisper. 'My stomach; my kidneys,' he continued. 'The prison had a very bad, what shall I say, *cuisine!*' He said this with an abrupt gayety and disappeared.

'He's crazy!' I concluded comprehensively, but his image and personality continued to fascinate and disgust me for a long time.

The chairman, who was the president of the club, called on six or seven of those present to tell how they thought revolutionary changes could best be brought about in the building trades of America. Two of the speakers told, with a great many bitter and personal and passionate details, the devil of a state the building trades of America were in; and against this they sketched, almost in lyrics, and with a great many references to Mr. Ralph Adams Cram (with whom, though, they had had certain differences), the *guild* life of Medieval Europe.

I found myself watching a man named Bolkonsky, at a point in the room farthest from the speaker's table and the electric light, who alternately rose on his toes and scraped his heels against the base panels of the wall. He spoke in a voice that was challenging in a subtle, subdued way, and embarrassed. There were a number of points which made him interesting. He had great lumpy shoulders, very much rounded, and powerful hands with big-boned fingers which he rubbed together now and then, but kept mostly behind his back. The rounded shoulders shot his neck straight forward, almost making a humpback of him, an effect which he accentuated by a nervous motion of thrusting. His light hair, which was thin,

anyway, was cropped close like a monk's. Hanging loosely from his shoulders was a dark green suit, with a faded pattern just visible in the cloth, and heavily patched trousers. He wore a white shirt with a low stiff collar, somewhat soiled, and a black tie that had fallen a little below the collar button and was pushed over to one side. His head was long from back to front, his forehead rounded and bulging. I was struck as much by the intellectual qualities in his face as by the nervous movements of his lips and the constant darting of his eyes from side to side in his head. He would make a few statements and laugh a bit — a nasal titter — and then start again. But the four or five people listening gave him an earnest attention, and did not smile when he laughed.

The group about Bolkonsky grew larger after a while, and among the others I joined it.

'— That was the trouble with Jackson and with Tannenberg and with all your working-class leaders in this country. If you ask me to put into two words what is the matter with the American movement, I will do it for you. It needs a Discipline, and it needs a Philosophy.

'We have learned the meaning of discipline in Russia, and we have made the working-class government out of it. It means doing what the Central Executive tells you, whether you like it or not. You might be sent to Herrin or to China or simply stay

home saying nothing when, in your own opinion, you thought it very important to shoot off your mouth. You have no discipline in this country, not even for ordinary strikes. Most American machinists think more of the Kiwanis than they do of their trade union.

'I say that a revolutionary movement anywhere in the world must rest on discipline, on class-conscious discipline. No man is any good to the movement who is respectable. A few of you know what I mean. Comrade Foster knows. I was in the 1905 Revolution, and had been in prison six times up to 1915, when I came to this country. You would not know me when I started to join revolutionary societies. I had some hair and was more handsome than what I am.' He appeared both ludicrous and likable, when he said this, looking about into everybody's face and smiling. 'I lived in Siberia for two years,' he added, coughing, 'and something has happened to my belly. It doesn't like me now.' He had lapses into partial jargon and then a return to the purest English. 'I went to a university in Russia and studied to be an engineer. My father owned a big business at Tomsk and I was to have the business. But I went to live at Petrograd and told him I was never coming back, unless it was when the Revolution came. I gave up my university and my money and the business which my father had for me, and

worked very hard in the Revolution of 1905 until I was taken in some street-fighting and sent to Siberia. I tell you, if you want to have a good time, don't come into this movement, but go to Cuba and become a sugar millionaire. But if you are a member of the working class, come into the movement, and expect you will be deported sometime and called Bolshevik by the newspapers. Otherwise, I told about Cuba.'

He stopped suddenly, panting. 'Give me a cigarette,' he said. I happened to be the one who produced the cigarette first, and Bolkonsky took it, thanking me without looking up. 'The other thing you need is a philosophy,' he said, straining his neck forward like a hen in search of a worm. 'Lenin was once asked what right he had to disband the army and make the peace in 1917. Peace had never been voted. He answered, "There is more than one way of taking a ballot. When the twenty million soldiers walked away from the front, they took a ballot — with their feet." There is really only one question to be asked of things that happen. Where do they fit into the revolution? But it is not so easy. Men must harden their minds and sharpen their wills on that idea; they need to keep saying with the Jew Jesus, "He that is not with me is against me."'

After Bolkonsky had finished, there was a half-minute in which the lingering passion of his words of

hate and devotion remained like a charge in the nerves — keeping men taut and silent, so that I went away and sat on the narrow, uncomfortable settle to look into the fire and to enter into the forest of my own thoughts. It had grown jungle-like. The trees grew very close together, with moss on them; their foliage was thick, and all the space between the trunks was filled with bracken and furze and accumulated muck of fallen leaves.

Merging into a falling river of molten steel that went onto the pit floor without any ladle whatever, splashing after the bodies of Hunkies, I had a vivid picture in my mind of the page of the Pathfinder which showed Pittsburgh trains, and the sign opposite most of them, meaning 'Daily except Sunday.' There was still ample time to catch the one-o'clock. 'The one thing people never forgive is the betrayal of one's class.' Here are the men who have stripped themselves, I thought suddenly. Down to their bruised backs, yes — what about little Jesus Christ Jew's bloody back? In that reformatory standing there near the fireplace, leaning over a chair with his arms dangling, to show how it was done. Trickles of sweat and blood soaking into underclothes and boots — the boy had grown up and gone to prison. 'There was a warden in my second prison who knocked me down and broke a stick about my face —' I remembered his hands twisted together,

and writhing, a few inches from my face. I hated to remember his eyes and his fang teeth skinned. This man had been stripped, I said to myself. . . . But he is quite exceptional. Society caught him young, lashed his face, and his mind, and left welts over both of them. But Bolkonsky. 'No man is any good to us who is respectable.' The long quiet Main Street of Upham with comfortable houses of 'honest respectable people.' Is that what prevents me from stripping myself? Mr. Dulles: 'We have heard a great many things about you, but we don't know very much . . .' 'Did you notice how he swallowed his potatoes?' What lovely fair hair, sweeping up from her forehead — she looked up at me, raising her chin slowly — Oh, God! It isn't simply in Pittsburgh, I said to myself, that men are too tired to see, hear, or think. I'm not mentioning hunger. All right. If any one can tell me *how* I can strip myself and *know*. That's what I want — Bolkonsky's face came into my mind, with its broad rounded forehead, its eyes darting like agile spies from one side of his head to the other, his thin hard lips, with the ironical corners of his mouth, the heaving of his shoulders when he spoke earnestly, like a great mountainous cringe. He stood there, stripped, indeed, of respectability, health, and nerves. Could he at last see things as they were? 'He that is not with me' . . . I looked into the fire, and bit the knuckles of both hands.

Some days after the 'Bolkonsky meeting,' a week or so, I think, I caught a touch of 'flu and stayed in my room wrapped in blankets and drinking whiskey under Haviland's direction. On the third day, I went to the S.P.G. late, and found a sense of inexplicable excitement, penetrating the room; Miss Reese and the two stenographers of the 'Weekly' more than normally distraught. The staff were all in the council chamber. I entered and listened interminably with a strong sense of depression, but at last I remember rising to speak. The immediate occasion was a remark of Mahoney's, an acrid one, advising S.P.G.-ers to have nothing to do with the naughty textile unions, because they were reactionary and capitalist.

I think I must have spoken a little as had Bolkonsky; I was just conscious of his mantle being upon me — the mantle of an ill-fitting suit and a soul scarred through single-minded devotion.

'Can't we stop,' I said, 'scraping skins? Try our own radicalism for a change, and leave alone the textile unions'? Let us cut up our own faces and let our neighbors' heal up.'

I looked down and found I had collected men's eyes and minds everywhere. In all my life, I have never had attention like that. 'By the strength and unity of our radicalism,' I cried, 'let us *realize* Drinker's plan, not next winter but *now!*' I sat down.

There was a solemn and absolute silence for two minutes. I breathed heavily and thought fiercely of what I had just said, believing in its significance and relevance more intensely with every second that passed. Finally Heard gave me an answer. Why should it have been Heard? He thanked me for what he called a word of 'authentic inspiration' and then stated that constitutional changes had occurred in the hour before my arrival. He explained them. Drinker had resigned from the directorship; a committee of three was now supreme, and the committee was — God save the revolution! — Mrs. Richard Hollis, Mr. Clay, and himself. He looked around the room solemnly in his mixed manner of ward politician and bishop.

Only by the help of both hands and an agonizing effort could I suppress my desire to laugh uncontrollably. If you are told — quite abruptly — that you are not living, but undeniably a corpse, that the world, contrary to all seeming, does not exist in the least, that the devil is the head waiter at Childs' and the head waiter at Childs' is the devil, what can you do but laugh — uncontrollably? And yet slowly I forced myself to think — of Drinker and the world's collapse.

Suddenly Croton was on his feet, with his cheeks puffed into a bursting question, and his hands on the seams of his trousers. 'I have bought passage

on a Greek liner sailing for Constantinople on the eighth,' he began. 'My plans are to remain in Russia for four months. If the Executive has any suggestions ——'

The Executive, talking in unison with Mrs. Hollis dominant, furnished any number of suggestions, among others that the trip be cut to two months. I heard Croton protesting — and at the risk of his trousers it seemed to me and of manual attack from Mrs. Hollis, who moved upon him with sharp, gesturing fingers. He compromised at three months.

'I want to ask,' said Mahoney — in the comparative lull that followed the deflation of Croton — 'whether we have sold the Oklahoma oil stock?'

The question was never answered, and it was the last time I heard it raised. Mahoney had hardly pronounced, 'I want,' when a very faint knock sounded, and the door back of his head opened. Miss Reese, with a resolute smile and flushed cheeks, entered the room. At her heels, crowding and eager, and making very difficult for her the even walk of ceremony, which she had chosen for the moment, flowed twenty-odd stenographers and bookkeepers. As the council stared at them, every available interval behind the chairs and the red oak wainscotting became filled with the flesh of clerical girls, and squeezed at the end of the room, creasing his stomach upon the back of Mahoney's chair, stood Ralph,

the messenger, whom I had taught, after terrible effort, to run my stenciling-machine.

Miss Reese looked at Mr. Drinker and laced her fingers together for courage.

'I have been chosen,' she began — with a thin sonority, just reminiscent of Heard's, and smoothing her bob needlessly — 'I have been chosen, as chairman of the soviet of clerical workers of the S.P.G., to demand from the staff council a seat for one of our number at the regular monthly or any special meetings convened at any time hereafter!'

The general astonishment — not only at the 'Soviet's' request, but at the flushed cheeks of Miss Reese — jaundiced so long — at her appearance like a roaring whip at the head of clerical hounds — silenced the staff for a full minute. Miss Reese folded the thumb and fingers of one hand over the other and stood at a kind of parade-rest; her lips returned to her condensed and defiant smile; it looked as if they had started to tremble, but that she had caught and frozen them in time.

While Heard fidgeted, moistened his lips, and fitted his fingers to the table's edge, Richard Hollis arose and shook hands with Miss Reese.

'I wish to congratulate not only you, but the whole clerical staff on your constitutional wisdom and your *radical spirit*. Mr. Chairman,' he continued, addressing Heard, 'I move that the petition

— or was it a demand? — be granted.' He smiled benevolently.

I noticed that Drinker had slipped out of the room but amid the wildest enthusiasm the petition — or was it demand? — was granted by the staff of the S.P.G. Every one rushed upon his stenographer to take her by the hand, Mr. Mahoney took both the hands of his; Mr. Heard bent long and earnestly over Miss Reese, conferring a kind of revolutionary blessing. Mr. Hollis lifted Ralph up on his shoulders.

On the way home, I stopped under an arc light on Bleecker Street to dig through the cards in my pocketbook for the name of the copper manufacturer from Connecticut. Disgust and revulsion at this pallid revolution had decided me. I would plunge back into industry. And Olga! I breathed . . . she has always wanted to live in New England. I found a time-table in the office of the settlement and studied it for morning trains.

CHAPTER VII

AMBITION

In the middle of a thick world of rumble, steam, and gears, I sat poised on an inverted soap box. A foot and a half from my face gleamed and twisted two cylinders of polished steel (I learned in technical maturity they were iron — special process). So shining and smoothly turning that at two yards they seemed not to move at all. But at my distance, intimate as it was, they whirled, and with a pressure of several tons crushed the broad bar of copper that shrieked between them. I knew they moved — by the trifling abrasions in their surface, and by drops of oil which they mixed with water and spit in my face.

Hanging to black and massive stanchions that supported the rolls was a pail of oil. Green machine oil. It was my job to spread with a swab, which I held in my hand, a film of oil over the red bar of copper as it moved into the bite of the rolls. I had been doing it since seven that morning — it was now three — with a rhythmic stroke, two above and two below, watching the oil bank against the shining cylinder as the copper gave in to the bite. The last foot of metal shot through and the machinery gave forth a

grunt of relief. A rational, but — to me — a very unexpected grunt. I slipped off the soap box and lifted a bar from a pile. At the other end of the bar was a small black being with nervous fingers. It was a Portuguese nigger. Together we stuck the bar into the rolls, lunging to make the cylinders pinch. My profession had become that of sticker. The Portuguese nigger was my sticker's helper. I fell again into the rhythm of swabbing oil. Already it seemed that I had been repeating these motions for a good many years. Also that I had learned by now all there was to know about the job of sticking a pair of rolls.

The noises of my world came to me from all corners: the groan of bearings, the buzz of machine belts, the clang of bars, and the even *szz* of my own rolls as the copper passed through. I sat at the center of the universe on a soap box. There were five men in my own country, the nigger and myself, and two helpers on the other side of the spinning cylinders — a Spaniard and a Wop, who received the copper when the rolls had done with it. Above all of us — both in rank and stature — was an English roller from Brum: 242 pounds, placid, superbly and languidly efficient, twirling with ducal disdain a micrometer on his thumb.

Beyond the radius which the Brum roller commanded were other pairs of shiny, grunting, cylinders, performing in the same way, crushing copper,

and organized with five men. Far beyond were the 'hot rolls': I could just see the darkness from which issued their spawn — hot red snakes of copper. It had been tormented through crushing slots and grooves, and lay twisted on the floor. Oblique shafts and nameless masses of machinery filled in the intervening chaos of the universe, but I looked at it all with eagerness: arms and fingers of mechanism that caught the copper in its innocency and attacked it with claw or knife, to change the mere surface of it, or the heart. Above everything, the overhead cranes moved complaining upon their unending journeys, and in the far background, half in darkness, a row of furnaces, red eyed and squat, blinked at me through the cracks of their closed doors. One had its red mouth open and was swallowing a tray of copper.

But the only thing with which I was intimate and affectionate was the pair of spinning rolls a foot and a half from my eyes. I knew their size, gleam, and the microscopic scratchings on their shiny surfaces; I knew their different noises of protest and acceptance. Outside of these companions I had just begun to break acquaintance. And outside the mill itself, the universe was still very new, indeed, though its general outlines were vividly etched into my recent memory. Besides the irregular brick and sheet-iron shack that comprised the rolling mill was a row

of irregular buildings, skirting the bank of a muddy river, becoming the bank itself at some points and all linked together to form the irregular body of a heavy river animal.

When, with a more ambitious vision, I thought of the animal, I was amazed at the industrial development of the United Copper Co., and marveled at the little river that had called it forth. Furnaces, rolling mills, machine shops, had propagated here in increasing numbers for a hundred and fifty years. Bowington, Sherman had been careful to say, had the largest copper works on the American continent.

Just after pronouncing those words, he had made me a modest offer of a 'start' in the mills, which I very eagerly accepted. It was perhaps the vast acreage, the power and the implicit wealth of the Bowington mills that I accepted thus eagerly, and the modest offer only as an appendage, necessarily accessory and necessarily modest. But I am sure there was no calculation in Mr. Sherman's mind. He offered me what the company allowed him to offer and a little more, and he spoke with a simple engineering directness of the U.C.C.'s developments up and down the river. We sat in his office together, leisurely, I thought, for ten whole minutes. He did not conceal certain major defects of the organization he served, making his criticisms technical, however, and without optimism or despair. I liked him

increasingly as he talked, and thought, as I had before, of a Colonel in mufti, kindly, modest, and definite. He looked into my face over a bank of copper paper weights and a brass ship that stood at the edge of his desk:

'It is a good way to begin, as you are doing,' he said. 'At the bottom. I did it myself.'

He added other things: 'You will get on with the men. I can see . . . ' and 'The Company needs college men not afraid to work with their hands.' Finally, he said, he'd see that I wasn't lost sight of.

This interview occurred the day after I studied time-tables on Bleecker Street under an arc light. (It was a three-hour run to Bowington.) Shaking hands with him, somewhat too fervently, I left, feeling that while the future would doubtless be composed of struggle and flavored with unpredictable excitement, it was, in a vast sense, settled. Work was to start in four days on Monday. Already I felt not only a copper manufacturer of no modest status, but on top or basically beneath all that, a married and a profoundly settled man.

I went straight to Olga. She received the news at first with tremendous excitement, finding in it very speedily subtilties of future joy I had wholly overlooked. She seemed to accept Bowington as readily and completely as she had accepted the S.P.G. Then, in a sudden calm, she asked me questions.

And she drank in my answers without comment, asking for more. I went over every fantastic detail of that Soviet meeting. 'I move that the petition — or was it a demand — be granted!' And Miss Reese's flushed face and skewed skirt.

'This thing has been growing in my mind,' I told Olga, 'ever since I went on that steel trip for Drinker.' The S.P.G. was a suffocation. Then I described Bowington, and a certain doorway I adored in the house I picked out for her.

She suddenly put her arms around my neck and said almost in terror, 'Let's be married now.'

I held her for a moment with my heart thudding violently in responsive terror to her own. But if she had wanted to jump into marriage with a romantic abandon, why hadn't she said so in S.P.G. days, when I had no prospects at all, or only the prospect of losing what I had? At that time, we made no plans without exemplary caution, calmly setting aside date after date in deference to the ingenious Mrs. Bannard. Now, when, inexplicably, I'm sensible, why —

'Bowington,' I said finally a minute later, 'has brought it nearer.'

She kissed me and I didn't know whether she was saying yes or expressing a new and unreasoning terror. A feeling of depression that I was unable to dissect, or to put off, coiled in my mind for a week,

till Olga and Mrs. Bannard visited me. Mrs. Bannard divided her conversation between execration of the Bowington Inn, its steam pipes, and its chambermaids, and remarks on the Treasurer of the Copper Company. She had met him in Philadelphia, where he had married and once lived. Before she had finished with him, she came to feel that, on the whole, I had done wisely.

During an evening with Olga, my depression faded into a joy of understanding that was immeasurably more tender and keenly beautiful than any we had ever known, and before the train left Sunday night, we agreed to be married at the earliest date following *my first raise.*

In those first days of spinning cylinders, as I sat on the soap box and rhythmically swabbed oil on the moving bar of red copper, I composed in my head a letter to Carl Drinker. Afterward I wrote it out and sent it. It said that I admired him and believed in his powers, but that the S.P.G. was a hell of a joke. Like trying to carve a revolution with a sword of butter. At any rate my temper was unsuited to it. So I had gone to work in the copper industry — I described swabbing oil, and my eternal cylinders. I had no ideas for or against any system just at the minute, but was going to earn my living in copper and get married. I hoped that he would write me and say what he thought.

He did. He said he was sorry 'in more ways than one' to lose me, but that the movement needed men who knew 'interior' conditions. That half of the S.P.G. inclined to think me an apostate, but that he had faith in me. He had faith that when the crisis or crises came, violence and blood, etc., I would be on the right side. He urged me not to be so foolish as to forget that there was a right side, and gave his reasons for believing the S.P.G. a better instrument than I supposed. As I read I regretted the phrase about butter. He added that I had been of great help to him in New York. I knew he meant that, and the sentence gave me a tearing pang of remorse, and came back to me at odd times during my swabbing days. I was only able to forget it at last because of ambition and because of the insistence and immensity of the job I had undertaken — of learning copper and growing rich.

Like many young Americans I set about the job of becoming a manufacturer with devotional intensity; from the very beginning inventing and following an efficient, even an ascetic régime of life and work. The mill day was ten hours long, seven to six, an hour allowed for lunch. I arose at five-thirty, washed, did my army exercises, and breakfasted with a number of mechanics at Mrs. Badger's. She gave the best food obtainable in Bowington for five a week. At a quarter to seven — fifteen minutes' walk it was

to the mill — I climbed into overalls and adjusted the guides of my eternal rolls. Lunch twelve-fifteen, supper at a quarter past six. All day I tried to remember the chapter I had read the night previous on the copper industry — between strokes of my swab — and in lulls to dig technique of rolling out of the Birmingham duke, who presided over us with a micrometer. As I think back, the picture of how earnest and how typical I was of the determined young American amazes me. Amazes me because I think of how untypically I had begun, how far from typically I was to end. But in this position I went on for, yes, for years, with subtle changes happening inside me, to be sure, but quite invisibly; till much later and rather abruptly I recognized their depth and fatality.

I used to spend every other night, in these days, playing cards with the third under-assistant of the Bowington branch laboratory, and a boy named Pomeroy who was doing the same thing as I — learning copper, as he phrased it a little cynically, from the 'bottom down.' His uncle who was vice-president of Sales was expected ultimately to exert a benign influence on Pomeroy's career. But even at this recreation — and the third laboratory under-assistant played bridge with exasperating precision — my thoughts were on the elements of the copper industry. We always talked copper before and after

the cards so that our minds at night absorbed all the information of our joint careers.

I lived in a four-dollar room at the head of Factory Hill, in the house of Mrs. Rolfe. She received me in the parlor with a social voice, untying a flowered apron with competent fingers. She was ample, healthy, and fifty — and told me in a chain of hushed breaths that she had just dismissed her second maid, that her father before he died had been an alderman, that the bathroom would be mine Tuesdays and Fridays, and that she hated smoke. She repeated she had never *thought* she would come to lodgers.

Mr. Tarleton, the superintendent, had been the instrument of my finding Mrs. Rolfe. I had met him one day after shut down, and he had at once made the suggestion. Mr. Tarleton reminded me of the stumpy mammoth furnaces in the dark background of the rolling mill. He was built that way and had a steady blinking fire inside him.

Talking with him made me think of the sea-change that was coming over the American copper industry. 'The future belongs to the laboratory,' he said. Revolutionary technique and machines. He expressed enthusiasm about the new ways, but I was doubtful if he felt it.

The American copper industry had grown up with a rule-of-thumb technique, quite unlike that

of steel. With an absentee management and a monopoly ownership, producing without too great effort a rich river of dividends. But something was happening in those universally revolutionary years. As an example, thirty years of ultra-conservative labor management had a year or two before culminated in a bloody strike and there might be another. A hitherto piddling competition was making thrusts at the 'greatest copper company on the American continent,' and drastic changes — vast mergers of mines and factories — were afoot. Talking with Mr. Tarleton, I became very much excited about the future of copper.

But during all these months, the center of my universe was the mill itself, the moving copper, and the spinning rolls. It was there that, while my hands were busy, my imagination grew lusty on metal nourishment. One day in the midst of a long two-hour order of rolling — that despite conversation with the Brum duke and a magnificent vision was very dull indeed — a unique event cut across the stiff substantial routine.

The Italian helper arrested the dropping of a finished load to stare mildly down the aisle of the rolls. I could see nothing, but I heard him whisper in a loud hiss above the jar of machinery: 'Beeg boss come.'

Nobody else on the rolls, nobody in the mill,

altered by a hair's breadth their customary motions, but it was impossible not to feel that everybody felt the insistent presence of extraordinary authority. A unique and unprecedented visitation. Two men walked down the aisle of the rolls. Though the presence of the two individuals, whoever they were, had probably no bearing whatever on the weal or ill of any of us, nerves were taut as if at the Judgment.

Suddenly I relaxed my eye and broke the conspiracy of careful inattention to stare at them. One of the visitors was Mr. Sherman. The other I guessed from the descriptions of legend was Mr. Baldwin, big boss indeed, President of the Copper Company! I learned later and suspected, as I stared, that this was most unprecedented. I remember at the time I thought it portentous. Of what I couldn't be sure — of some amazing change perhaps for Bowington that would alter the condition of copper manufacture for all time . . .

Mr. Baldwin I knew to be an old man past seventy — but his limbs, though angular, were compact and springy. With the face of an unmistakable Yankee trader — and a — no other word for it — noble brow, going up and spreading around the temples. A face that was puzzling and ageless. Mr. Baldwin looked straight at the spinning rolls — at *my* rolls.

'I wish I were twenty-five,' he said, in a sharp and

rather thin voice. 'This place is thirty years behind steel.'

My copper bar ran out and the rolls releasing it to the Spaniard, grunted. In a minute and a half, I had put in another and began to swab it, two strokes above and two below in an even rhythm. We did fifty-five bars before six o'clock, but it was impossible not to remember very vividly, through every bar of the fifty-five, the face and the voice of Mr. Baldwin. I was just twenty-four years old.

For years there had been but one restaurant in the central or Anglo-Saxon part of the city. But while I was in Bowington another started at the South End, serving better coffee and omelettes. It was called 'The Gorgeous' and was kept by a Bulgarian Greek. Being always hungry, after shifts in the copper mill, and especially after 'heavy stuff' (150-pound bars) I would eat all I could at Mrs. Badger's, and then go at nine for coffee and cornflakes in 'The Gorgeous.'

The counter had a varnished look due to the grease and cream already spilled on it, and rubbed in by the wiping cloth, but the place as a whole possessed a clean, new look. I sat down one night at nine-thirty over shredded wheat and a cup of coffee, and found Mr. Tarleton, on the next stool, chewing a pancake.

He recognized me, and asked how I liked rolling. I said I found it very interesting and that I had been

able to move about a good deal and learn the jobs of different rolls.

'That's right,' he said. 'The business is different from my day. Science has got into it.' He pronounced the word with reverence and resentment. 'In my days we rolled shell head brass and if it was off by three thousandths, we let it go ——'

I talked to Mr. Tarleton a little about steel, comparing as boldly as I dared the shambles where I worked with the rolling mills of Cleveland and Pittsburgh. The damned industry, I thought to myself, is mediæval!

Tarleton was saying something about 'accurate measurements,' but while I listened I applied Chicago to the Bowington valley. What about cranes, I mused, and a moving floor system in place of Portuguese backs; it was necessary to find brains for the industrial general staff which should be at the top, and to apply them down through from accounting to scrap. On another tack, I remembered excitedly the mammoth mergers in steel, railroads, mines, and ships.

Tarleton had been talking all the while and out of the stream of his sonority I distinguished the words, 'A laboratory man has been made a vice-president ——'

Any thrills of ambition that I have, I feel in advance because they first get a physical hold. The

nerves in the center of my chest act queerly, as if shot with electricity. But why a vice-presidency, I meditated —

I began following my new star by borrowing Ohm's Metallurgy from the third under-assistant of the Bowington Branch laboratory, the next night, and it was immediately interesting. I explored the delicate structure of the bulky bars I had been banging about. Vaguely I had known about them, but here was rich, sharp detail. Under the microscope, copper became a design — an architecture of particles — that rearranged themselves bewilderingly when touched by heat. 'Fatigue of metals' grew intelligible, and the strength of baking a very familiar miracle. I went to the under-assistant's home to talk heaters. The man was married and we sat in his kitchen. Why couldn't all the old wood burners be replaced by electric ones? we asked — difficulties, of course, with the vacuum chamber. We went into coils and physics. His wife listened loyally for ten minutes and then, folding up her knitting, went slowly and resentfully to bed.

One day I was met on the street by Mr. Sherman, who said: 'Come around to my house to-night, if you can.' I went with a seething mind.

The Sherman house stood midway in the hierarchy of gentry homes — and aspired toward substantial comfort without display. Mr. Sherman, with his

back to the fireplace, said the reason they hadn't put cranes into the refinery was because some day they were going to build a new one altogether, with the latest equipment.

'What do you think of the rolling mill?' said he. 'Granting it is a mess to work in, the production record is amazingly high.'

I was girding on my metallurgical sword and buckler. I proposed to attack and then, while my opponent recovered, bleed him for technique, data, and scandal on men and departments, data on selling and markets.

But into the room at that moment came a young man, with a banjo, who shook hands and sat down, waiting for a chance of interruption. Two minutes later, Mrs. Sherman, opening the front door, let in an eddy of Bowington young bloods, four musical instruments, and a dog.

The Refinery disappeared from the conversation, and home brew displaced it. Mrs. Sherman explained how she made hers, and brought forth on the instant a dozen bottles to prove its substantial worth. I suddenly found myself delighted with the beer, and with the music that was beginning from an assortment of instruments the young bloods carried.

Buck Farnham formed a musical nucleus with the banjo, which he had learned to play during the war on board the U.S.S. Nebraska. There was a mando-

lin, which the assistant advertising manager played, and a cornet. A man named Grieb made startling use of the cornet — a very old young blood — the oldest possible; one of those chaps who keep the look of a boy gamin in their faces up to forty. People wondered whether he would ever get married, and then grinned a little and said something that implied his youth hadn't been wasted in celibacy.

The young bloods got going on war tunes at first: 'There's a Long, Long Trail'— which went well with the spontaneous variations of the Hickman whistle; 'Keep Your Head Down,' 'The Bells are Ringing,' 'There are Smiles,' 'There's a Rose that Blows'— and all the others.

And after that, Mrs. Sherman or some one started the young bloods on the 'old songs.' So we had 'The Sands of the Desert Grow Cold,' 'Beautiful Lady,' 'Rag-Time Violin,' 'Why Don't They Set Him Free?'— a song about Harry Thaw — and twenty-eight others.

One of the most memorable events of my mill life happened in the week following the young blood's party. I met Bill. One morning, the duke was abruptly removed from my rolls, and placed over a mammoth pair at the other end of the mill, and a young man of twenty-six, a second-generation Brum roller, came to replace him. He was a strongly built,

but stoop-shouldered and pallid American, with nothing at all distinguished about him, least of all his face. The expression upon it was distant if not distrait, and a little repellent. During the first two days of his new captaincy, the copper orders that came to us were singularly regular and offered neither instruction nor novelty. But on the third day, in the midst of the afternoon's monotony, I dug suddenly into the gold of Bill's curiosity. It had been an excessively oily morning: two solid hours of sloshing green treacle onto copper ribbons and my own legs. I sweat oil, and reeked with it. But unexpectedly, in the midst of the numb, sub-marine, mill morning, a bit of freak copper — a short crinkled piece used to try gauge with — curved from the rolls and tore away six inches of overall from Bill's knee.

He looked up quickly at the spanner that controls the distance between the rolls.

'No wonder the bastard bucked.'

The spanner, struck by a passing truck, had screwed down the rolls.

'I've seen a bar curve double,' he went on, 'come about to slap the sticker's tail.'

That tipped us into copper talk; we blazed into a bonfire of craft friendliness that kept our minds alive for a day.

Blue-print the machinery first. Two steel rolls, three feet long, a foot through, revolving quite close

to one another. Though a system of screws and bars has brought one end of the roll nearer by a couple of thousandths of an inch, your eye won't notice it. A bar of copper is fed into the squeeze. You'd think it would come out straight on the other side, with one edge of the bar a couple of thousandths of an inch thinner than the other. But it leaves the rolls in an amazing curve, as though it were the outer edge of a vast circle cut out with shears. If it is a long bar of copper, it will actually curve about and slap the man who stuck it in.

The reason is simple, and would be clear to any cook who has worked dough with a rolling pin. On the side of the bar where the rolls squeeze closest, the metal is lengthened most; on the other side, it may be lengthened only half as much. The least squeezed is the inside; the one squeezed most, the outer edge of the curve.

That is all. But this sort of stuff waters wonderfully a parched morning. Till then I had said to myself: 'Men grow into machines. Here is stupidity,' said I, 'repetition and death that will fatigue an automaton. Does anything ever happen in a copper mill? Can there be a technique of the clothes-wringer?' But after the curved copper tore the cloth over Bill's knee, I wiped out my brain and took a breath.

Days are really different from each other. On

certain of them devils get into the shiny steel rolls and genii upon others. Without a technique subtly distilled from experience, metal will tear and jar itself through the rolls, will tie itself in knots, will crack and destroy the beautiful surfaces of the rolls, or split in two a shaft weighing a ton and a half. And times come when it is hard to find any technique but sorcery to make the rolls behave. They acted that day, for example, like a girl with a love secret.

And the metal itself — the bars and coils of red copper — it should ever be kept in mind, is alive and full of deep tricks. That pile of coils, that pyramid of prospective monotony waiting to be worked through the grinders, each bar in it has a temper and a twist, or a slippery face, or a sting in its tail.

A good roller knows the topography of those eternally moving cylinders as a geologist knows the ranges and depressions, the seas, lakes, and volcanoes of the spinning globe. He explores them with his fingers, he reads them in the minutely varying surface of the copper which the rolls crush. He guards certain virgin surfaces — near the center — for delicate craftsmanship. He cools their surfaces with a stream of water when rolling. He covers his rolls at night with a lavish cloak of oil.

While Bill fed my mind with roller's technique, I fed his with questions and with data swept up out of my own career in two mills. But though Bill's mind

delighted itself in natural science as kindled by the United Copper Company's rolls, I suspect that the man's intellectual enthusiasm was fed by secret and occult springs. In the body of a second generation English roller from Brum, I detected, I believe, the heart of an alchemist. I know he enjoyed finding phenomena — which he could explain to me, but I know he enjoyed much more phenomena which he could not — stuff convertible into pure technical wonder.

'Queer thing about kerosene,' he began one day, with a fiery alchemical light in his eye. 'Put it on a bar of copper and shove it through the rolls. What d'ye know! Comes through thicker!'

'What do you mean?'

'This is what I mean. You know this, don't you? Squeeze a bar in the rolls with no oil, or kerosene or nothing on it, and it'll come through some thickness or other, call it anything you like. Put it through with oil on it, and it'll come through a mite thinner. You know that, don't you? Oil takes up a suttin amount of room. But put her through with kerosene, and she'll come out thicker'n if she were dry, by God!'

'Hell, no,' I said gently.

'It's a fac', Chris', it's a fac'. Ask my father — he's been rollin' thirty-eight years, rolled in Birmingham before he came here. . . . He tol' me. It ain't reasonable, but it's a fac'.'

I thereupon pointed out to the alchemist that, though kerosene was mighty thin, it wasn't thinner than the free surrounding air. It might not add appreciably to the thickness of the bar passing through the rolls — *but it could hardly be thinner than nothing at all.*

Bill admitted the reasonableness of all I said, but it only kindled his enthusiasm for the phenomenon. He asked his father about it that night. And next morning came in glowing with the mediæval glint in his eye.

'Pop says it's so. He don't know why, but he's tried it, 'n' he says it's so.'

'You and I will try it,' I stated.

'By God, we will! Some day when we get some smooth thin-stock.'

One day we got thin-stock and tried it. The bar that sneaked through the rolls dry and the bar that went through bathed with magic kerosene came out an identical gauge. Bill was chagrined, but not convinced.

'It works with Pop,' he said.

Bill's intellectual curiosity continued unabated and so did mine. Sometimes it takes all the strength of a man's arms and legs to unreel a thick coil and drag the end up to the rolls. I was battling with a tough coil one morning, when Bill put his head round the stanchion of the rolls.

'Do you believe in perpetual motion?' he asked calmly.

The coil snapped out of my hands. I caught it again after a grapple, and shoved it into the guides.

'No,' I answered.

'I do.'

It was a fifteen-minute coil, giving time for a brief résumé of the theory of conservation of energy. Bill was impressed, but doubts lingered.

'Well, suppose you take a dynamo,' he began, on a new tangent, and trying at the same instant to straighten out a wicked twist in the tail of the coil. It snapped from his hands and lifted my oil pail clean from its hook. Rolls, soap box, me, Bill, and adjoining Hunkies wiped lubricant from the creases in their faces and necks, and wrung it from unguent pantlegs.

We never settled the question. Bill still believes.

It had been months since I had heard, almost since I had thought of the S.P.G. For a few weeks, after leaving for copper and Bowington I used to receive an occasional note, uninvited, but very welcome from Miss Reese giving me items of current radical theology; but these had now long since ceased. Once, indeed, on a visit to New York to see Olga, I had dropped in at the familiar offices on Fourth Avenue, and found everything the same even to the

customary uncertainty as to who held executive power. The flush I had noticed in Miss Reese's cheeks at that last soviet meeting had faded, I observed, to its customary yellow. She talked to me all she could, though fiercely preoccupied with proof, and regretted for my sake that the staff were all 'in the field.'

I determined to go to Fourth Avenue on my next trip to New York, but it was a full month before I could leave Bowington. We were working overtime on Saturday afternoons and nights. But at last against my copper conscience I took a day off and went to the city. Even so, it looked greatly as if I would return to Bowington without news of either the S.P.G. or of Drinker. The hours with Olga were swift and precious and there was so much to be lived and talked into them. But chance (and a second-hand-book store) served me, quite without any planning on my part. Olga and I went out to buy a novel and we found Croton poking his fat fingers into old copies of Diderot and Voltaire. He was preparing to cheat the bookseller by proposing to exchange a bundle of French novels for an early edition of the 'Letters from England.'

'What have you been doing?' I asked, with the severity of impatience.

'I am just back from Russia,' he said in a breath, and told us about the trip. It was a long time before

he got back to the S.P.G. 'Richard and Mary are together at No. 17,' he said finally, 'why don't you ——'

'Then what is Mrs. Hollis ——' I began.

'Alice is very active,' he said in another breath, 'doing a remarkable propagandist job in — in — coal.'

'Where does she live?' I asked.

'On the floor below, but there is absolutely no feeling,' he added, 'no feeling at all. The present arrangements are ideal.'

'Please tell me about Drinker,' I went on, with a presentiment that the news would slip from me if I didn't hurry.

'He's away,' said Croton; 'you knew of course that he is co-executive with Hollis, in charge of the field — he is almost always off in Pennsylvania somewhere; retrenching, gathering up the strike wreckage, reorganizing, preparing for the next ——'

'But,' I insisted, coming back once more to the personal nexus in New York, 'how are things *really* at the offices ——'

He interrupted me: 'The present arrangements,' he said, going back to an earlier phrase, 'are ideal.'

Those were the last words I could get out of him before he plunged back impetuously and it seemed to me irretrievably into the Encyclopedists and Voltaire.

Seven A.M., with two spinning rolls — and metallurgy churning in my head. For several weeks I had tried dividing those swabbing hours into thinking times. In this way: By taking a ten-coil lot for recalling all the letters I ought to write, a twenty-coil batch for riveting into memory the number of passes each thickness of copper required.

Just now I glanced back of my rolls, where was standing a pile of eight different coil sizes. Was there no standardization in the fabrication of copper! I groaned, and grew indignant and sweaty over my thoughts of efficiency. If these coils were sorted and rationed through the mill by gauge and quality, the production would be very substantially, oh, very substantially indeed, increased.

I looked for the hundredth time at the room in which I worked with its four hundred men crowded between confused shambles of machines. An industrial child born without benefit of engineers, I meditated. No efficiency expert has ever polluted the place with a touch of organized knowledge. Among other things an automatic oiler is a device that ought to be set up on these very rolls of mine. It would, of course, eliminate me.

My emphatic thoughts set up a sympathetic emphasis in my biceps, and I slapped a half-ounce of oil on the wide-moving bar near my lap. So much oil and with such decision that it rose over my breast

and into my eyes. When I opened them again, I found myself looking into the solid countenance of Mr. Tarleton.

After I wiped the oil away and the bar had gone grunting into the hands of the Spaniard, Mr. Tarleton motioned to me to step into the aisle of the rolls. I stood there a few feet outside of my world, feeling myself wrapped and caught up in the amazed and terrified gaze of the Portuguese nigger, and the curiosity of the Spaniard, the Wop, and Bill.

'How could you do with a bit of a raise? Could you use it?' He shook his shoulders in an elephantine shiver of jocularity, and went on. 'Sometime next month there'll likely be a man go out of the laboratory. Mr. Sherman mentioned a young fellow of your name. See what we can do,' he grunted, beginning to agitate his shoulders slowly in anticipation of the humor to come: 'Get you out of here before you drown,' he roared, looking at the pool of oil at my feet. That night I took the train for New York.

It was so warm that both Olga and I risked going out on the apartment roof without coats. Out there in the presence of the familiar constellations of the skyline, we fixed up a date for the wedding, four months and two days away. Then I turned to find Mrs. Bannard, standing near the stairs.

'Come in at once,' she said, 'where it is *warm*.'

Olga took her feet, which kicked shamelessly, and I her shoulders. We laughed in a flood of ecstasy and carried her downstairs.

CHAPTER VIII

MACHINES

As time and the rolls kept moving, despite monotony, ambition, and Olga, I found it impossible to put Drinker out of my head. It was in part, I think, because of the growing pleasure I took in the company of a middle-aged roller, Dirty Reed. The zest for living and the variety of his imagination which he had maintained under the shocks of life was quite as remarkable as his obscenity, though not so famous. His independence reminded me of my radical knight-errant, though Reed was, I think, the more philosophic of the two. I decided at last that I must find Drinker again. Though his function in my life as God-head had perhaps passed, I needed him increasingly as a friend. What difference did our opinions make?

A month later I took a day off and went to New York. Arrived there I went straight to the familiar building on Fourth Avenue, and was shocked to find that the S.P.G.'s home office had shrunk to two little rooms shared with a sewing-machine agency. A stenographer — also shared with the agency — answered my inquiry for the staff. Every one, she said,

was 'in the field.' I stood hesitating over the girl's typewriter which I had interrupted and which hung fire, so to speak, while its owner got rid of me. There was another and a subsidiary reason that I was seeking out the S.P.G. It was to recover some personal papers I had left in its files — especially the 'Industrial Republics' which had lain buried there since I had undertaken the more arduous and less ambitious business of rolling copper. I asked, with real fears, where the files of the S.P.G. were.

'All those papers are in the basement,' she said, looking down at her shorthand. I was surprised and encouraged by the promptitude of this information. And in the end, when my identity was established, I was actually turned over to the janitor who led me into unsuspected depths with a lantern. The basement bulbs were all broken.

I shall never forget the mazed feeling of bewilderment and desolation with which I viewed the visible remains of the S.P.G. There, in bundle, in barrel, in cabinet, tier upon tier were buried — or at least hidden — the Hollis-Drinker brand of American radicalism. I found literal moth and rust over Henry Clay's charts of the 'Advance of Textiles.' This sight was strangely shocking, though even in old days I had thought them ridiculous. After the janitor had left me, and I had conquered a little of my emotional reminiscences, I set to work with energy

and some ruthlessness to excavate my buried manuscript. If I could only find the cabinet that had stood in Croton's sanctum! The boxes filled two little rooms, and it took me nearly a half-hour to go through one. As I worked, I heard, or thought I heard, a rustling or scraping of papers in the next room; it was so slight that I suspected a mouse, possibly a cat after one. But as I entered the second room it increased to a loud crackling; I moved cautiously around the corner of a very familiar wooden cabinet. On the other side, holding a lantern quite high and peering expectantly into my face, were the snapping green eyes of Croton. The pudgy, creased face, and the greased black ringlets above it were unmistakably his. Only the eyes were unnaturally wide and a little frightened.

He took my hand, quite speechless, I believe, from emotion, though I think he felt it was only an incorporeal vision of me that had emanated from one of the green cabinets. But he recovered himself rapidly. I explained what I had come for. He nodded, and said impatiently: 'All my Russian notebooks are here — it is of the utmost importance,' he concluded, without fixing an end to his sentence. We talked for a few minutes about the old S.P.G., but he was distractingly engrossed in his search for the Russian notebooks. At last he stood up letting his fat arms fall at his side in despair. I noticed in the dim light

that his trousers fitted him as closely and threateningly as ever.

'Drinker told me they were on top of the famine notes. Those were as a matter of fact the last words he spoke to me ——' He turned with a look of tragic appeal, that was thoroughly ludicrous.

'Poor Drinker,' he continued in a kind of wail, 'if I'd only known, I'd have brought him here before he left. They may never be found!' he cried piteously.

'Known what!' I said, at last revolting at his tragic egoism.

'Known he was going to walk himself into a machine belt,' said Croton bitterly. 'I'd have made him show me the notes before he left.'

'Good God!' I breathed, full of fear and swelling with anger at the little man in front of me; 'is he hurt?'

'Hurt?' he said thinly, the fingers twitching at those dangerous seams of his trousers.

The details of Drinker's story came to me through much exasperating irrelevance. Croton seemed to forget repeatedly, in the telling, that I was ignorant of the simple core of the tragedy, and so maddened me continually with the sentiment in which he insisted on wrapping the event. In fifteen minutes of what amounted to controversy I separated a sequence of facts. Drinker had been working for some months in a Johnstown rolling mill near an un-

guarded belt. Six weeks ago, he had slipped into it and been killed. This much was beyond question. Mahoney, once co-editor of the 'Weekly,' and Hollis went on to bring back the body. Either the dead man had no relatives, Croton said, or none were willing to come forward and claim him. As executors of his estate, Hollis and somebody else — Mahoney, I think — had demanded workmen's compensation, under the law, and obtained it. These were the essential ingredients of the tragedy, but they seemed to Croton, as far as I could make out, quite secondary. He was more absorbed by a theory of revenge — capitalist! — which he believed was being wreaked upon Drinker. The theory had all but effaced his personal grief. Only as he left me, he said tremblingly, putting his pudgy hand in mine, 'He was the best of us — wasn't he? Thank God he died in a steel mill!'

That too made me a little sick. I wanted to get away, and try to think.

The next day, as part of my attempt to think, I sought out Miss Reese at the address given by the sewing-machine agent. It was her 'business address.' Since the S.P.G. had dispensed with her services, she had become a stenographer for a wool broker. The exigencies of business only permitted thirty minutes for lunch, but I made her stretch it to forty, as she

ate — at her own suggestion, and my expense — in the nearest Childs's. I found she knew less than Croton about the fatal accident to Drinker — she had left the employ of the federated industrial republics some months before — but of the latter months of the S.P.G.'s history she gave me, in her own way, a rather complete account.

When the expensive rooms in Fourth Avenue were abandoned, she went nearly every day to the Hollis apartment. It was there that for nearly a year, most of the business of the S.P.G. had been transacted and she as the sole surviving 'soviet' worker of them all knew a good deal about that tragic retrenchment. Mr. Heard had faded away nearly two years before, and Mr. Clay, it was said, had gone back into the Communist Party. Ultimately the S.P.G. had shrunk to four — and Miss Reese. Richard Hollis and Mary Colquhoun were 'together,' said Miss Reese, and 'Mrs. Hollis lived on the floor below.' This was clearly the 'ideal arrangement,' of which Croton spoke on his return from Russia, and which had been managed, at least in its earlier stages, 'with no feeling whatever.'

It was not easy from Miss Reese's narrative to construct the inner story of life in the Hollis apartment, not because she was unwilling to talk, but because, following the temper of her mind, the talk expressed an odd mixture of acute observation and

fantastic judgment. As I sat there listening and trying not to interrupt, I felt like an historian putting together, piece by piece, a personality which time had overlaid almost hopelessly with misunderstanding and sentiment.

For about a year, Drinker made it a practice to stay at the familiar Hollis-Colquhoun-Hollis apartment at Number 17. The visits varied in length from a day to a month, and most of them occurred before he had settled down in a Pennsylvania steel mill. His passion for Mary Colquhoun was apparently genuine and lasting. To use Miss Reese's phrase, she seems 'to have encouraged him' from the start. And at the end of three months, she broke completely with Hollis and wouldn't live in the same apartment. Apparently when Drinker was in town she lived with him, and the rest of the time alone. Yet both Drinker and Mary continued to come to the Hollises' on S.P.G. business, and for a time, it seemed, the work of that organization flourished with something like its old religious fervor. Of the state of Richard Hollis's feelings, Miss Reese was a little doubtful. 'He was about the same,' she said, 'to *me*.' Apparently toward Drinker, and toward the S.P.G., he played the game.

In giving the final episode, so far as she knew it, of the relationship, Miss Reese was clearly recalling an incident remembered with abnormal vividness. She

had been frightened a little, and retained that emotion in the telling. The narrative achieved, as did so many of Miss Reese's, a blending of the ridiculous and the terrible. Because of visitors 'who didn't understand,' Miss Reese said, the Red Army machine gun that used to face one in the front hall had been taken upstairs into the study. It was there that all the dictating and typewriting was done, and it was there, while at work faithfully, and she said as noisily as she was able, that she became aware of an unusual drama in the back room. Carl Drinker and Mary were having a lover's argument, more than normally disconcerting. Miss Reese could see them across Trotsky's machine gun and through half-drawn curtains. She looked only once, she said, but despite every effort and a brutal abuse of the typewriter to maintain noise, the essentials of the argument came through to her. Both speakers were apparently quite oblivious either of her or the typewriter. 'It was about living in Pennsylvania,' she said. Apparently one of the arguments offered against it by Miss Colquhoun was that it was 'the most corrupt State politically in the Union.' Another was that 'there were no radicals there.' If nothing else confirmed the authenticity of Miss Reese's observations, these two quotations would have been enough. No one could have thought of them but Mary. The argument grew more and more

vocal and violent, but it was not the violence of either party which ended it. It was Mary's compliance. She said in a pleading tone, to which apparently by that time Miss Reese listened eagerly, 'I'll go for a month, and then I'm coming back to Richard.'

Apparently at that, Drinker came out into the hall — 'his face was terrible,' she said — and he left the building; she heard his slow footsteps on the stairs.

About ten weeks later, a month after the tragedy in Johnstown, the faithful and sole surviving secretary ceased at last to go to the apartment at No. 17. Wiping her lips on the paper napkin, she looked up at me and for the first time in the whole forty minutes, her voice faltered. 'Mr. Hollis,' she said, 'told me I needn't come any more. There didn't seem to be any more S.P.G. correspondence,' she added.

Her face was flushed a little, as she said this, as it had been at the soviet meeting, but I wasn't sure of her emotions. There seemed to be no way of telling whether it was the Johnstown tragedy, a loss of radical hopes, or the collapse of her dictation, that produced the flush, or broke the disciplined accents of her voice into prolonged tremors of emotion.

The only addition I was able to made to Croton's story came from Mahoney, who had accompanied Hollis to Johnstown to bring back the body. I found this radical engineer in the office of the sewing-

machine agency. His account was a great deal better than Croton's. It was in fact altogether too competent. He spared me no detail — but it is enough to say that Drinker's head had been crushed beyond recognition between leather and steel.

'God! Why didn't they put a guard on the belt?' I cried out, falling back on resentment for relief.

'It looked safe enough to me,' said Mahoney.

'The best men are careless,' I said, 'they ought — '

'Nobody,' said Mahoney decisively, 'was ever *that* careless.'

Back on McCarthy's rolls after my New York visit, there would come into my mind the shafts and gears of that Johnstown rolling mill as my imagination pictured them, and especially when the belt on our own rolls loosened a little and slapped. Every day for weeks I saw in the moving bar of dark copper Croton's face against a stockade of dead cabinets and heard his voice wailing with grief over the dead man and his own notebooks. 'Poor Drinker,' he would cry piteously, 'if I'd only known . . . They may never be found!'

As the days passed, monotony and the personalities of the mill buried those haunting memories of Croton and numbed even the grief and horror of Drinker's death. Every day in the midst of my oil smearing, I learned increasingly of Bill and his

alchemy. And he built up, bar by bar I was going to say, the structure of his personality. If my mill life was an adventure in ambition and oblivion, his was a battle between his instincts and the need for bread. The anxieties of home, where wife and child were both ailing, added to the weight of the day's rolling, and both settled more and more heavily over the effort of his mind to invent and to imagine wonders. Dirty Reed among all of us had the richest past and present of any man in the mill. Eighteen years' wandering about the British Empire, an unquenched passion for women, and the shrewdest wit in the mill made him a comforting part of certain days of relative leisure, when I could slip into the slitter's corner for a chin or, after four-thirty in the afternoon, a smoke. The highly colored thread of his existence was due to cross the black one of Halsey, harsh and sullen-eyed boss of the rolling mill. I could tell that by a feeling in the air — but no one knew when or how. There were isolated souls, whose screen of solitude set me wondering, like my own Portuguese nigger, who knew no words of English, save the six he needed as sticker's helper, and there was a solitary and incessant hooker on the hot rolls named Rakhofsky, whose face when I caught it in the metal light was miraculously without expression — a successful sinkage, I mused, into the mechanism which made copper.

One day I was transferred from Bill's rolls to an adjoining pair, whose roller was a middle-aged American famous for bad temper and reported to have epilepsy. His name was Burton, and even before I became his helper, I had unconsciously caught from the resonant air of the mill hints of his character, and rumors of a peculiar rivalry in which he found himself placed. It was said that his oldest helper aspired to steal his job and become roller himself. The man's name was Kreck, probably a shortening of something unassimilable and Slavic. But what saved the rumor from the ridiculous was the character — perhaps also the posture — of the man himself.

Burton's rolls were not common garden variety. They were a specialized pair, which did the most accurate and finicky work in the mill. Copper, six one thousandths of an inch thick, used to be delicately crushed down to four. But Kreck's job was to take the issuing band of copper in his fingers and smack it on to the revolving block. It always wound evenly into a beautiful coil. A rushing, ribbony metal and a spinning block. A blocker's fingers, it is well known, are forever in danger, but Kreck had executed his maneuver, year in and year out, without spoiling the copper or his hands. His body was an adequate one, but not at all remarkable as hunkies go; it was the way he stood and moved that made him impressive. After he had taken position behind

the rolls, he seemed at once established forever and ready to spring. And the movements of his arms were graceful and never disturbed the erectness of his torso.

Kreck had a look of inner resignation, and a faculty of obliterating himself in the presence of superiors, that was extraordinary. I used to watch him at it with curiosity. Whenever the mill boss, for example, came to exchange a word or an order with Burton, Kreck would at once get the rolls between him and his betters or go to fetch some trifle from his locker. Still, when spoken to, which was seldom, his answers in broken English had dignity and judgment. No one would have suspected him of threatening the profession of a skilled and native American. But, one day — so I had it from the mouth of gossip — an event occurred which destroyed forever the anonymity of this hunky.

Burton failed to appear one morning, owing to the arrival of a son in his family. The son chose a very bad moment to come, as his father had plunged into a rush order of dynamo copper. But when Burton returned to the mill at three in the afternoon, the order was complete — its twenty-four gleaming coils in a neat pyramid beside the stanchion of the rolls. Without consulting Halsey, boss of the rolling mill, the anonymous hunky had done the job. Under the circumstances, it was difficult to crab Kreck for this

breach of discipline, and Halsey contented himself with saying, 'Now test every goddam coil.'

It was after this that other rollers, loitering past in the aisle of the rolls, would pause and stare at the statuesque blocker. The more efficient and self-obliterating he became, the more they suspected him. A deep plotting hunky, they concluded, who would stand watching. A few who believed the man should be given trial at rolling extinguished themselves in the general murmur of distrust.

When I went to work for Burton, I must say I found him an excellent craftsman. He was a man of forty, fat, fuming, and pompous. A long experience and great skill — but the way in which he applied these qualities was — to understate the matter — an outrage. He grumbled at his helpers, his machinery, and himself. And he interfered with all of us. Taking *my* guides, for example, and after an hour's fussing putting them back as I had rigged them. But it must be said that his final product was a near approach to perfection. Nor was he reticent about expressing his hate for the accurate and unwavering Kreck. 'That damned hunky,' he would say, but always out of Kreck's hearing — 'is trying to sink his teeth in my job.' Viewing the poised and accurate Russian, gracefully 'blocking' on the other side of the stanchion, looking down at his work with that face of peaceful reconciliation, I couldn't help mak-

ing evil comparisons with the toadish body and fussy mind of my superior. And when one day I entered into a brief conversation with the uncommunicative Kreck, I made up my mind.

I had asked him a few technical questions which he answered with good nature, his very imperfect English in no wise detracting from their lucidity and balance. Then suddenly, on impulse, I said: 'Kreck, how long have you been at this job?'

'Eighteen years,' he said, giving me a glance, gentle like his others, but remarkable because it continued steadily on my face for a long minute while I was trying to get up courage to ask what I wanted to know. 'What are you ——?' I began.

To my surprise, he helped me out. 'I haf' to learn rolling,' he said, and the gaze continued to burn into my face, gentle, steady, and unfathomable — until it was *my* eyes which dropped and I turned back to machine oil and the spinning rolls. This was the nearest he ever came, I believe, to confessing his guilt to anything more living than the gleaming copper.

One day I returned from the drinking fountain with the thought in my head that it was about time for Mr. Tarleton to remove me from mill routine. What had become of that comfortable assistantship, I fumed, in the Bowington branch laboratory? Burton, I could see as I approached, was juggling 'my'

guides, more nervously than ever. Suddenly I saw him pitch forward with his very head in the grinding bite and his feet sprawled backward and splayed out. As I started to run, I could see that he had put his hands on the guides and was trying to draw his legs up, but couldn't. He fell heavily with his face jammed into the metal guides and his right hand upsetting my oil pail. I could see the fingers of his left hand moving weakly into the bite — and I say, to my shame, that I stood motionless — and sickening. It couldn't have been more than a second after when Kreck lifted Burton out by his shoulders. I think the Russian came round the rolls in one leap — he was eternally poised for it — when he heard the jar of Burton's face on the guides. At all events, he saved Burton's hands if not his life. In another minute men grew on all sides. Incredibly, I thought, they knew what to do — from experience, it seems. In an orderly fashion, they surrounded Burton on the floor while he thrashed. Kreck held his head and I could see that it was lacerated and bloody except for a narrow oval of foam at the mouth. I looked on with horror and fascination till the writhing passed.

'The Company protects itself,' Bill explained to me, 'by making Burton sign a paper that they aren't responsible. He usually has his fits in the aisle,' he added.

Weeks later, pushing a truck of annealed coils from the furnace, I came to a point in the aisle where I could look at the broadside of our rolls. Burton stood at the guides fussing over them with a wrench, his face lowered to bring his near-sighted eye close to the bite. Kreck, with his unhurried and muscular dignity, swung the blocked coil from reel to table on the other side of the stanchion. I saw them thus with an added detachment and a heightened clarity, as though they stood somewhere beyond the strenuous immediacy of the mill, and out of time altogether. It is that way that I have remembered them, as two men engaged with terrifying passions in the manufacture of copper.

I dislike rocking-chairs a good deal, but that was the only kind with which Mrs. Rolfe had equipped me, so I sat in mine, and was sufficiently thankful. I sat in it digesting Mrs. Badger's boiled dinner, and doing little else, except looking into the back yard, where Mr. Rolfe was removing dead leaves from the lawn in hopeless defiance of the wind's accumulation. One of the ways in which I spent evenings was to sit just here in my room reading one of two things, either Mr. Ohm on copper or economics. I was still waiting for a resurgent energy —in my back and legs — usually the result of a few minutes' applied digestion, when a thought came to me unrelated either

to economics or copper. It was that I had promised Hilda Benton to call her up after ten o'clock! After ten o'clock! I had met her at a dance to which the Young Bloods had inveigled me last week, and had involved myself in complex Saturday afternoon arrangements. To-morrow was Saturday. She was to be out for some extraordinary reason till ten, and of course I couldn't call her at six-thirty A.M. when I left for the mill, and noon would be too late, so I was calling at ten. It didn't occur to me till afterward that it would disrupt and horrify the Rolfes, and lead to a number of abysses wholly unforeseen.

It took me some little time after I had risen out of my chair and lit a much-carboned Welsbach to persuade the black hair and eyes of Hilda Benton to fade efficiently from my mind, in order to read 'Wages and Capital,' an 'Examination of the Wages Fund Doctrine,' by Taussig. Or to stop the speech-producing part of my brain from forming phrases: 'Yes, that would be fine — you bet I will, great, what time?' But I did, after a time, and achieved that curious and benign detachment of body from mind or even from emotion, that is sometimes the fruit of manual effort plus a hungry intellect. You might have thought that I would have fingered Mr. Taussig's bead-strings on the Wages Fund, for the sake of knowing how the poor copper workers, including myself, were ever to better their

twenty-seven cents an hour. But I didn't at all. I had a great deal of golden data gathered at the S.P.G., as well as in the behavior of my own pay envelope, to which I might have applied the Taussig pages, as I turned them, or I might even have applied my nuggets of wage information to Mr. Taussig. But I didn't do either. I followed the chain of theory and thought, as though it had been a fugue of complexity and splendor. I took his balanced sentences and his economic metaphysics as equally savory for a sharp appetite. I ran along his reasons for the pure fun of the thing with a gay foot and light-hearted brain. I've seen this thing happen again and again with me and with other people who have done a hard day's work with their hands. People have greatly admired the sturdy resolution that drives workmen to study at night in workmen's classes, and distinguish themselves. So do I, for there are times when with aching and sodden limbs intellectual labor is a heroic job — no less than that. But there are others when it is sheer refreshment — a falling into a Turkish bath of spiritual and intellectual delight.

I pulled myself up — or rather my legs up under my chair — and pulled an unreliable watch out of my breast shirt pocket at twenty minutes past ten. By the time I had 434 on the telephone in the back hall, at the old-fashioned upright box telephone that

hangs on the wall at the foot of the back stairs, it was ten-twenty-five.

'Well, I may not be able to get sandwiches. I'll bring something. I'll bring the fruit — how would that be? I'll bring a mince pie or something from the Quick and Dirty. Oh, I'll promise to eat everything I bring. The Browning Foundry are having a picnic to-morrow too — all the machinists. No, of course, great, fine, thanks. Great. Three o'clock. Yes, I will.'

The next noon, when I was coming home from work, Mrs. Rolfe met me in the back entry. She had unusual magazines of authoritative explosive about her. In her skirts, in her eye, in the tilt of her nose. Her fingers were in a nervous clutch upon the back stairs' bannister. I had no idea what she was going to do.

'Mr. Rolfe has asked me to tell you a decision he's come to,' she began. 'He has insisted upon my taking a rest.'

'Well, I'll be damned,' I breathed, 'she's firing me.'

'I have been obliged to look after my niece,' she circumlocuted; 'it has taken a good deal of my strength. I can't afford it; my health can't afford it. And Mr. Rolfe has insisted on a complete rest. Especially as I'm not used to it. I've never taken any lodgers before. We never thought we *would* take

lodgers. Mr. Rolfe and I never considered it. But when my daughter married, there was that room. The room you've got. I thought I'd try it. We thought we'd try it for a little. The room was of no use to us and it's a very beautiful, sunny, pleasant room. But it's beyond my powers in the condition I'm in. There's the cleaning, for example — every room must be cleaned ——'

'Ha,' I thought, 'cigarette and pipe ashes.'

'Any man's room ——'

'Dirty boots ——' I hazarded.

'Then there is a certain amount of noise — at night ——'

'Never,' I cried defiantly, but inaudibly, 'have I returned after nine-thirty for a whole month — church mice are not more creepy than my feet ——'

'So Mr. Rolfe has insisted that I give it all up and have a complete rest.'

It was out.

'I'll try and look up rooms to-morrow, Mrs. Rolfe,' I said.

'You understand ——'

'Oh, absolutely.'

The next evening I went to the house of Patrick Dollan, the mill guard, to ask if his wife would rent me the little attic room she had offered through Patrick some months before. I found her delighted, and she began to spend the rent enthusiastically before I left the house.

'Where are you staying?' said Mrs. Badger, at dinner, fixing me with what I used to classify as a Baptist look. I met the glance, but with cowardice and anger jelling inside. She had, of course, learned that I was to lodge at the home of a 'Mick.' That's it. With her hatred for Irish Catholics, she was quite capable of putting me out. I was a favorite boarder, but Mrs. Badger never permitted affection to influence her 'religion.'

'Mrs. Rolfe came in to-day and said you were leaving,' she began.

I listened with rising spirit.

'Said the work was too much for her. Hypocrite! Lazes all day — like her husband. I wish she had my work — and my rheumatism!' she screamed.

'What did you say?' I asked in the greatest impatience.

'I told her she'd regret it,' snapped Mrs. Badger quite promptly.

'What do you mean?'

'I told her she'd regret it,' the lady returned calmly, 'turning a young man out with ancestors like yours.'

'What?'

'That's what I told her. "What ancestors?" says she. "Didn't you know," I says, "that he was descended from Thomas Jefferson?" "From Thomas Jefferson," says she? "Why don't you turn him out,

and then see," I says to her. "You'll be known for it all over Bowington. And you having so little to do!"'

'You told her I ——'

'I told her you were descended from Thomas Jefferson,' said Mrs. Badger.

The external pattern of life, the voices and the faces, the fragmentary phenomena that go into our brains through the senses, are so partial that we know, I am certain, very imperfectly most of the time what we are at. To explain the delicate energies that assemble themselves into another's motive is fascinating, but largely vain. It is difficult enough to record what happens to one's self in the take-holdable world of event and behavior. Whether Mrs. Badger told Mrs. Rolfe precisely that odd and untruthful story of my progenitors, or not, I am at a loss to know. I think she did. Whether Mrs. R. acted upon that motive in restoring me to the 'sunny pleasant room' on the second floor that her daughter used to occupy, I don't know. I think she did. But, at any rate, this is what she said to me Monday evening at eight o'clock.

'You're losing a button, Mr. Burnham. It won't take me a minute. I'll get some black thread. I hope you will forget what I said the other night. I was overtired through having that niece of mine on my hands for a week — she was going it every

minute — and very trying for an old person — It seemed to me I couldn't face anything else. But your room is no trouble when I'm used to doing it. I believe one is better anyway for keeping busy. My husband says so. We never kept any regular lodgers and we don't intend to. There, in another minute you'd have lost that button.'

Mr. Tarleton passed down the aisle of the rolls one day, and I thought of the excitement with which I had felt the eyes of President Baldwin on 'my rolls' that early day of my mill life, and heard tremblingly, 'I wish I were twenty-five; this place is thirty years behind steel.' I had worked ten-hour shifts since then for eight months and I was still ambitious, but my ambition was hungry. It had grown peaked in the mill air, I meditated, eating roller's technique in small doses with a little salt of alchemy. The next day the time-keeper came to me and said: 'You go to the office.'

'What do you mean?' I asked.

'Mr. Tarleton wants to see you.'

'Well, it's been a good apprenticeship,' I thought, with a warm feeling toward the superintendent, and a rough, imperfect vision of the room of the U.C.C.'s branch laboratory.

'We're moving into bad times,' said Mr. Tarleton at once. 'I thought you ought to be told.' He

spoke as though I were an enemy or a superior; responsible at any rate for the times. 'We've simply had to lay off the assistants,' he continued. 'I don't see what else ——' He looked down darkly. 'We've got to economize.' I felt an impulse to encourage him, but he began again: 'Mr. Sherman has asked me to keep an eye on you — but what can I do?'

I felt the proper answer was, Nothing.

'Two labs closed entirely,' he said bitterly; and then suddenly his voice changed to a rich optimism, 'Well, Mr. Sherman and I won't forget you. Good luck!' He beamed at me dazzlingly until I left the office.

'To hell with Tarleton!' I muttered on my way back to the mill, feeling the dead weight of my eight months' rolling like a cake of copper around my neck.

A crisis of mill life occurred at this time that abruptly ended an era for several lives, including my own. The Protagonists were Kreck and Halsey. Jake Halsey, the mill foreman, drank hard, but he knew copper. I had marveled at him for months. In that box-like tin office, jutting from the east wall into the chaos of the mill, he spent his days, coming in drunk at seven A.M. and bobbing his head over a newspaper till noon. Halsey's physical system was shattered and he suffered abdominal pains hourly. I remember I brought him an order to O.K. one day

and he stopped with his pencil lifted, to stiffen in his chair, face muscles taut, and his teeth in a click. He looked half invalid, half *débauché*.

One morning I returned from a few minutes' refreshing and unrefined conversation with Dirty Reed to find Halsey staring at Kreck and trembling from head to foot. Kreck's hand was on the spanner of the rolls and Burton nowhere in sight. It was evident that the retiring but ambitious hunky was rolling an order.

'Kreck,' I heard him say, 'by Christ, I'll roll ——' he described an amputation he wanted the machinery to perform on the hunky's body.

Kreck opened his mouth and shut it quickly, but his limbs were as motionless as the stanchions. Halsey moved close to his face regarding him with an uncanny mixture of sullenness and intensity. Quite unexpectedly he smelt liquor. The surprise was mutual. Kreck used liquor with discretion, but it had never occurred to him to anticipate inspection.

'Kreck, you're drunk,' stated Halsey malevolently, the saliva oozing from the corners of his mouth. 'Drunk, and, by God, fired!'

I listened with anger and fascination. Halsey instructed Kreck minutely about his mode and tempo of departure, and then moved off unsteadily to the tin office, to sink once more over the legal notices of his newspaper.

Kreck regarded the rolls for a minute without moving and then walked to his locker and tied his overalls into an incredibly small bundle with a piece of string.

I wanted to run into the tin office and pummel Halsey. I wanted to grasp his neck first, his thin bobbing neck, and pull him out of his chair by it. But I couldn't work myself up. I waited till the next day. Then I walked over to the tin office. The wrongs of that statuesque and mysterious hunky rose in my brain and glowed there feeding my spirit. It was intolerable, I thought — after eighteen years! Bill, of course, had told me I was a goddam fool, because Halsey never took a man back. I told Bill I didn't care.

Halsey was chewing the items of his newspaper, like a cud. He had reached page five and the real estate notices. 'I'll get Sherman to fire him,' I thought.

He looked up and stiffened. 'I want to talk to you about Kreck,' I said, thinking my voice was persuasive. Halsey said nothing, but dropped his eyes to the real estate notices. 'I'll make you listen,' I thought. 'He wasn't drunk!' At that the man twisted, and moved his lips, but an abdominal pain caught him swiftly and as always made him straighten, not double, so that his stomach lifted the desk, and papers poured off on the other side.

Then, after a minute, groaning, and with his hands round his middle, he lay down full length on the floor of the tin office, with his fists clenched and his teeth in a click.

I waited.

The assistant foreman and a very old clerk sat on stools and looked out of the window.

We waited about fifteen minutes. Halsey rolled a little on the floor, but made no sound.

We waited another fifteen minutes. The two men in the office were writing.

Finally the old clerk turned round to me. 'It won't do any good,' he said plaintively.

I told him I didn't care. I'd take it up with the management and have him fired — 'If they knew half I know about Mr. Halsey ——'

'They do,' he answered, 'they know the other half. Jake,' he said after a long pause, 'knows copper.'

I waited for another fifteen minutes.

'How long has Mr. Halsey been in this mill?' I asked, to make a little talk in the tin silence.

'He's always worked in this mill,' returned the old clerk.

'I know, but how long?'

'Forty-one years,' said the man, turning on me with a light in his eye. 'The last eight years he's had it hard.' He looked down at the rolling body on the

floor, and his lip trembled. 'But it's wonderful how he holds on.'

I waited another fifteen minutes. The clerk said nothing. Then I got up and left the tin office.

A report which I had the next day from Pomeroy destroyed my hope of restoring Kreck. It was that Sherman had been called to the western branch.

This whole affair marked the close of an era in my life. As I walked out of the tin office leaving Halsey on the floor — he had begun rolling about again — I suspected it. But not till the next day was I sure. It marked for me the substitution of something else inside me for ambition; the transformation of the rolling mill from the rung of an oil-smeared ladder — to a world. But not until that report about Sherman came was I sure of it. It was an odd thing; beyond regret for the statuesque hunky, I had no feelings. That was what convinced me — with something of a shock — of the collapse of my ambition.

I don't know the precise nature of the substitute I achieved for the kind of thing in Pomeroy that kept his head, figuratively speaking, in his uncle's office while his hands were thrusting bars of radiator brass. But I felt that, in the first period, I had been a diver in some suffocating submarine medium, looking at the features of the world through a glass darkly, and breathing from a pump. From that point on through all of my mill life, I breathed with my lungs, and

looked intimately through no obscuring glass whatever at the world.

I continued to work on the rolls, and, whether from policy or forgetfulness, Halsey indulged in no vengeance or reprisal. I sat at the center of the world while all about me in radii from my soap box were the virtues and vices of half a hundred machines, with the whole room soaked in noises pounding and delicate and in the spectrum of mill color. But closer than these was the presence of men's minds — inchoate and half-lived, an exhalation of human impulse, incorporeal, it seemed to me, and uncharted.

On the train to New York and to Olga — I went down, as a rule, fortnightly — I sat beside a man who reminded me of the Chicago banker, who in Olga's opinion had swallowed his potatoes so vulgarly. He had the face of a man who has both lived well and worked ruthlessly all his life. It was fattish and cut into deep trenches of flesh. All his character had gone into business, I meditated, and all his weakness into the narrow margin of hours that encircled it. He was reading a newspaper, the front page of a New York newspaper, when I got on and sat down carefully in the restricted space beside him.

'What was that last town?' he asked, without looking at me.

'Bowington,' I said.

He concentrated for a moment and crinkled the paper in his lap.

'Copper mills?'

'Yes,' I said.

We made the journey to New York without further conversation, and he read his paper through even to the real estate and legal notices, I think. 'He hasn't a suspicion,' I thought, 'that Bowington is where Dirty Reed lives, or what a time Halsey has had since Kreck left for the unknown, to find a blocker. And what does he know of modern alchemy?'

The rest of the journey my mind dwelt upon Olga. For a number of months her mother had been unwell, with some mysterious illness, and a vague plan had grown out of it that she should go abroad — Olga to be with her, of course — daughter, nurse, and companion. We both regarded the trip with something like horror. To begin with, Olga had grown increasingly impatient for the wedding since I had gone to Bowington, and for me it seemed impossible to face two months of sheer separation. I had learned to feed upon these Sundays that I spent with her or she with me in Bowington, like a camel, nourishing myself from the hump of memory. Moments in the mill eternity that were otherwise intolerable became bearable and even precious through

the memory of a vivid presence, lately known, or soon to be enjoyed. Besides it seemed to me that the trip, whatever it did for her mother, would almost certainly be bad for her. She would continue, as in New York, to have her mother's invalid presence beside her with the added responsibility of travel. But despite our joint objections it was decided that night that the trip would be made, and the sailing date was chosen.

Whenever I think of the Bannard apartment now, I think of it as it appeared on the night before Olga's sailing. The soft lamplight, the bare table except for the two books she had left out to show me, the couch with a dust cover over it, and the great rug rolled up at the end of the room leaving the floor bare.

I remember it seemed to me, as I stood on the threshold of the drawing-room and took her in my arms, that the passion which came would burn us down like trees to the level of the earth. It took the flesh of what was a little while ago ourselves, and pressed it, hot and fused, into a new body.

I sat on the couch beside her, holding her hand in mine; her face was quivering and rainy. 'It hurts to love,' she said, trembling, and weeping, flung herself into a new passion.

The books and a letter from Haviland we ex-

amined, and, as she moved from the table to the couch or sat in a chair by the lamp, reading, I was aware of every lineament of her grace as I had never been. A traveler I suppose from a country of waste and dunes will see forest and lake with new clarity and emotion. My mill life appeared to me remote; its features and its persons tawdry, and a little unreal. As I watched Olga in the soft lamplight, turning the pages of a book, and stopping now and then for her own thought which for a moment would lift her out of time, I loved her unbearably. She seemed to go into a kind of citadel and worship there something as exquisite as herself. After a little she began to ask me questions.

They were about Mrs. Rolfe, and the mill, the young bloods, and the cut on my middle finger. About everything I said in answer, in explanation, or in boisterous invention she threw the cloak of her sympathy and delight. But she always wanted more. I felt that her love went out, and stood before me trembling and a little anxious to take all the things I'd said and done and bathe them in its fluid of perfection till they came out shining. Then, too, I never quite satisfied her; she never with her love's dialectic could pry out of me the ultimate impulse of my spirit. And she sought for a piling up of trifles, in the hope of final discovery, I suppose.

'What is happening in the mill?' she said to me that day. 'I want to know everything; tell me about Bill and his alchemy.' A way she had was to remember bits like that — especially about mill things — and produce them out of place like broken bricks to suggest to me the rebuilding of a world.

I tried to answer her; I tried to go into the mill for her, and come out again and tell her what it was like. But I couldn't. I told her about Bill a little. I told her about Mr. Sherman's going away. That was all I could do — the limit of my expression. I put a wall around the mill and began to hate her for trying to break in.

But she kept coming back again and again, and her words became a kind of pursuit. I tried to block my own escape by willing to tell her, but I only went faster. This sounds ridiculous, but it was terrible to us. I remember that she cried out with tears in her eyes, 'Tell me again, Harris, who Rakofsky is!' And it was not long after that she flung herself upon me and asked if we couldn't be married at once — before she went abroad.

And so we came at last to the wretched question of our separation, but it was decided at last that she should insist on cutting the trip down to six weeks. And then we took up all of its desolate features, one by one.

'I hear,' she said at last, brightening for a mo-

ment, 'that Austin Haviland is over there somewhere.'

'You must find him,' I said quickly, 'and make him come back on the boat with you.'

In the face of the coming calamity of the trip abroad, we forgot, so to speak, the paltry civil war that had been dividing us. She sat quietly for a moment with her chin raised and her hands in her lap; some of the beauty of her citadel mood shining down on us both. But, when I kissed her, the joy of that moment grew almost beyond endurance. Good-bye! Good-bye! It seemed to me that our love had never been more beautiful, or more keenly terrible.

CHAPTER IX

BREAD AND FIRE

Two months after Olga sailed I received a letter saying her mother was seriously ill, and they had settled for indefinite weeks at Lucerne. I found myself after this news sinking into a coma of stoicism, which obliterated both curiosity and anxiety and left in me an indifference both to the future and the present. It was surprising to find how many of my companions existed in the same state. Even a Kreck crisis, I believe, had there been one, would have found me indifferent.

There was, to be sure, the correspondents' thread of communion. Those evenings when the barometer of my courage was lowest, I wrote pages into the weekly letter; and I was able, by expressing my despair, to all but remove it. Unfortunately the letters I received from her came irregularly, despite my begging her to space them. An excess of drink following a long drought was bad for my health, I told her. And finally even letters lost their power to warm and vitalize. The symptoms of Mrs. Bannard's neurasthenia ate up Olga's pages increasingly and we exhausted our language and our powers at the last in the expression of despair.

Besides, the letters only served to permeate a half-day or so of mill routine. My mind struck at resurrecting details on the second day, and the rest of the week was a drab coma, interspersed fitfully with day-dreams. My life aped the regularity of the rolls themselves. Since the firm establishment of my ancestry, I had no further hostilities with Mrs. Rolfe. I scarcely saw her. I arose at five-thirty as before; by seven o'clock at night I had finished supper and was ready for the evening. During the last hour of rolling, from five to six, I decided what I would do. I had three alternatives. I could play cards with Pomeroy, read or write my heart into note-paper in my room, or go to see Hilda Benton. I had taken to visiting her twice in every deadly week.

Pomeroy at about this time was removed abruptly from his job as sticker on the finishing rolls and made into 'assistant statistician' in the sales' office. I gave my fortunes an auditing on that day, especially when our coils ran out and Halsey dropped me into the 'move gang' to carry copper from the furnaces. But it was conscience and not desire that made me envious. It seemed to me I ought to be ambitious. Morally I *should* have an uncle in the mill who would make an 'assistant statistician' out of me on some unexpected and miraculous Monday. The corpse of my ambition would no doubt leap and

walk under such circumstances. I had heard of college men buried in the wire mill for five years, dry-rotting as helpers — for the job can be learned in six weeks — who were suddenly 'remembered,' and lifted in a twinkling into 'executives' and opulence. I knew that a simple rise from mill to office was a very rare and romantic phenomenon; this was a corporation in New England, compounded of old family properties . . . I often thought of quitting for the West where mushroom helpers ripen so speedily into engineers and directors. But that would mean chucking my job into a painful heap of wasted years, and starting at the bottom of another hierarchy. Besides, despite monotony, dry-rot, and hell, I liked the mill. There were mornings that my blood leaped happily as the regiment of thirsty rolls began their slow deep rumble, turning moodily in their housings, devouring copper with grunts and shrieks, and when through veils of steam I beheld the mammoth bodies of the annealing furnaces, winking their red cracks at me, or opening up ruddy jaws for a fresh breakfast of coil.

But one day I fell into an unexpected panic of mind. I was chatting with the old clerk, sole satellite of the dyspeptic Halsey, in the tin office, when he suddenly grew reminiscent. It seems the man had a technical education. He was a civil engineer! At the age of twenty-five, he had been offered a share in

a western copper company. 'Just then I met Élise,' he said, 'and got married.' It had seemed to him safer to stay on his job in the mill — '*for a little while*,' he said. And now every lunch hour, he borrowed from Halsey the financial news to post himself on the earnings of that western company, and count up his losses like a miser. After I left the little tin office, I went straight to Bill, for whom I was still sticker. With his brains, I told him, he was wasting his time. He replied that he was married. That set me off. All afternoon, I explained to him the reasons why he should leave the United Copper Company.

In the course of the next two months, in the midst of emergency orders that engaged the whole mill, I was made a roller. I threw down my swab with delight, although I knew it was ridiculous to value this tiny promotion as a step toward the row of brick offices on the hill. Indeed, coldly considered, it was a step backward, for it confirmed me as mill man, and tended to extinguish me as privileged learner and capitalist. But at the end of a month the rush collapsed, and my authority with it. In the famine days which followed, I sank to sticker's helper, and my helper, with an oath and a laugh, was dropped from the mill.

I returned to my former coma, and it served me, as it served many, as a substitute for vision or

thought. Every noon three girls passed down the aisle of the rolls to the 'fine wire' mill. One of them had black hair and eyes, with a poised way of stepping delicately between bars of copper. She made me want to take her into my arms, but one of the helpers always thought of a joke after she had passed, and that punctured both her image and my desire. One day, however, her face remained in my brain, to remind me persistently of Hilda Benton, and to torment me with the thought of her body and the faultless mould of her hair.

At six o'clock, as I dipped my hands in kerosene to cut the grease away, I decided that I would not go that evening to see Hilda. My imagination was too full of her body. I rewashed my hands in steaming water and went to supper.

After leaving Mrs. Badger's, I found myself walking past the Armory to the yellow house that belonged to Hilda. We sat on the sofa and I told her that I was engaged to a girl named Olga Bannard and that she had been in Switzerland with her sick mother for eight months. After about an hour, I talked about going. She pointed out that it was ten minutes past eight. Utterly miserable and hating her, I yielded to look through twenty-four 'new photographs.' She sat there bending her apple cheeks, her soft lips and her exquisitely chiseled hair close to my face. I put the photographs on the

floor, and bent her back against the pillows. I had the odd feeling as I did so that she was edible and that I would eat her up, if I could.

The next morning at the rolls, the episode seemed to me perfectly ridiculous — and two nights later, I went again.

Late one evening — I think it was in the third week — we stood near the door of the drawing-room, trying to say good-night, and making a very long job of it. Finally, her eyes clouded and, putting the fingers of both hands into the cloth of my shoulder, she buried her face in them. I tried to raise her head, but she flung herself into a desperate, locking embrace. When she lifted her face, her eyes were wide, full of fear, and wet. 'Harris?' she said, in a tiny voice, and embraced me again, as if it were for the last time, as indeed it was. I began to hate myself profoundly. Then she drew herself away a half step and a trembling shook her like cold wind in a tree. I waited for a long time with my hands on her shoulders.

The next night, halfway up the hill to her house, I turned round and walked back home. I never saw her again, though I planned it a number of times. It seemed to me the only way. Either I could stay away, or I could go to her, and her fresh loveliness would overcome me again when I touched her, as I surely would.

Then it seemed to me in the spring months, as I watched the three girls go down the aisle of the rolls, that I would ask the one with the black hair, who walked so delicately between the copper scrap, to be mine all of that spring. The other helpers made no secret of the same desire or of the strategy necessary for success. But I never accomplished it. The mill suddenly reeled before an onslaught of new orders and, although I was not made roller again, we worked overtime till nine each night. With the thirteen-hour day, I became a machine again.

Days became increasingly like one another, but I remember one in this period that lives in my mind either because of some incident which touched my emotions, or because of the sheer weight of its boredom. I began work one Monday on the rolls of McCarthy, an immemorial Irishman, who was said to have started in the rolling mill before the days of Halsey. The morning opened, I thought, auspiciously, by McCarthy's allowing me to act as roller myself for the first few minutes, while he went to the toilet to rid himself of a slight nausea, which followed hard upon a wake, he told me, observed long and conscientiously through the night. The 'set' which I made on the rolls for the first order was simple, but it was hard to find a spot on the iron rolls smooth enough to roll the copper. They seemed to me in a condition as wretched as McCarthy's

stomach. But I enjoyed finding the spot, and hacked sample after sample of copper for the try-out, with McCarthy's rolls shears, whose blades alone were as long as my own legs. He came back in ten minutes, deflated and melancholy, and we settled into the routine of the day.

The mill, as I looked at it — that 'confused shambles of machines' — was wholly different from what it had been three years ago. The chief difference was that I didn't see it at all. Its curious shapes and protuberances, its flying fragments, or slowly moving masses had faded — into my mind. I could thread my way in its streets blind-fold, avoid its grinding dangers, or lay my fingers with responsible pressure on its levers, without looking, but to see it — I couldn't, any more than I could see the cells of my brain. A fresh emotion could make me see, no doubt, a fit of Burton's, a roll's cracking. But nothing less. I began the day, as usual that morning, with the mill established in my head — but not in my eye.

I am certain I hadn't *looked* at the hot rolls for a year and a half. I could have described to you the heavy red snakes of hot copper that writhed within glimpsing distance of my right eye without seeing them. I could have drawn for you, without noticing, Rakhofsky submerged there by the hot rolls in his incessant and uncanny industry. And in a brain

cell somewhere was recorded the scrape and image of six talons of steel, scalping away the black red skin of new copper.

It was the same with sound. I heard my bar of copper, and the thick orders — between quids — of McCarthy. The rest of the mill was silent. Yet just below the level of my thoughts was the whole roar of it.

Giving no thought or will to the days for an age of long, normal coma, the life of the mill had accrued inside me like a mass of body cells. I knew, to begin with, that Nielson had been made blocker on Burton's rolls, and was expected to succeed him when his fits became too bad. Nobody knew it, everybody thought it would happen. In the last fit, Burton had fallen against the brass corner of a gauging table and cut his eye; the morale of the mill suffered heavily during the rest of that afternoon. Pomeroy, whose last day it was in the rolling mill before he became assistant statistician, had estimated production loss due to defective morale at thirty-three and a third per cent. Although I had given neither logic nor imagination to it, I was conscious that Dirty Reed, despite his conspicuous humanity, was growing a grudge against McCarthy, that Monkey-Faced Alec was demoted to the move gang, cause unknown, and that the scalping machine operators were mutinous. I had intended to press for that story, but

neglected it. A stout hunky who was bald claimed that his hands shook all night after operating, but it was a piece-rate cut that stirred up the scalpers. There was a special case of a swearing man who was sacked, but I haven't the story — that cell ceased to grow. The lives of many men, like Bill and Halsey and Reed, had been filling out, though, and I began to know the origin and bloody incidents of all the strikes. Last week some one had made five hundred dollars in the stock market. Above all, a floating rumor — taken into the lungs like malaria — was predicting disaster in the spring and summer. Few were willing to put the fear into words, but when they did so, men talked of the depression of 1907.

Not one of these things was at the cool surface of my mind when I began the morning on Mac's rolls. My wits were whittled sharp to the minute's duties — and this because for ten minutes I had made the set and been captain. For fifteen minutes more I was alert to my small world, alert to its metallic presence, and its duties. Two massive shoulders of iron were before me — and between, the bright spinning rolls. Like arms thrown up crazily in despair, the black handles — the spanners — shot out from them irregularly. There was no soap box and I stood the ten hours close to the shoulders dowsing with oil a discolored bar submitted to distortion. Two

strokes above and two below with a swab. I counted them into a rhythm: one, two, three, four, and watched at the bite where the green oil banked and the copper submitted. In twenty ways an easy job, I thought. I tightened the guides, watched the rolls shaft jar a board loose on the housing; it opened and shut it like the gill of a fish. Mac's baggy face, with dejected and disorderly hair all over it, was visible over the cylinders, and behind me my bearish helper — a Pole — sleepily tugged at the new bar. No heat, I thought, like molten steel, no burns, no cinders, no filth, just a daily battle of machine oil, a little lifting and a great deal of nothing at all. Like a million other jobs in the cock-eyed world. And there is, after two or three years, the routineer's refuge of day-dream and oblivion. The bar snapped through with a satisfied grunt and the blocker jiggered it onto a full truck. With the Pole I mounted another onto the reel — a wrecked wooden thing — which jerkily fed metal to my swab and me.

One, two, three, four . . . green oil on a blackish bar, blistered and just annealed. In the midnight twilight of the apartment roof, lit by the constellation of the Woolworth Building, Olga's body rose out of the shadow — like a swimmer from opaque water, and turned with Woolworth starlight splashing down over her cheek and shoulders. . . . I and she — with my breath held — and my fingers touch-

ing her arm, through the thin sleeve under her cape, — the gasp she gave like a sudden breath-taking, that passed into me — the lifting of her chin — slowly — one, two, three, four — the loose board meets uncannily my first stroke of the swab — there I missed it — I lie in bed with her, her arm lightly round my shoulder in the new house on Mowbray Street which I picked — and the sunlight is deflected queerly by the slanting walls — we watch it as we cling lightly to each other. I open the door of that bedroom and show Olga into it for the first time. — 'These are rather small bedrooms, Olga.' 'But I love a sloping ceiling,' she answered me. 'I adore this, Harris.' Four or five men laughed heartily and accepted tea from Olga, in the small old-fashioned parlor, which we had made comfortable with her furniture. They were classmates and inclined to shake hands. 'But you exaggerate,' I said, 'what a vice-president of U.C.C. can afford to do. It isn't much.' They laughed again, especially Haviland, good-humoredly. I showed them charts — they made me do it — pressing the button for Miss Reese, who pulled them out of the green cabinet and laid them on my office desk, with its memoranda under a glass top. 'This saves the labor of two men,' said I. One, two, three, four, a twisted bar that can hardly get into the bite! I looked down at the guides. It is very hard to explain, I mused, collecting my wits,

why an automatic oiler has never been devised. There must be a reason for it. I thought in blueprints. It could be bolted at the guides, I thought.

Then I walked over the cliffs of East Bowington, which are yellow in the late summer with goldenrod — it was glorious — to that pitch of rough lawn on Baldwin's Cliff, shaded in the late afternoon by the topmost reach of the hills. It was an hour and a half from Bowington. We sat down on it and I took her in my arms — the girl with black hair that used to walk down the aisle of the rolls, stepping delicately among copper bars.

My Polish helper lifted the empty oil pail down from its hook. 'All right, more oil.' This was a friendly act, not necessitated by any custom or rule whatever. He went waddling, his short arms and bull shoulders disappearing in a forest of machinery.

Turning to watch him, I caught sight of the heater by the hot rolls; the door was open and the bars inside looked like an incandescent woodpile. A roller starting to pull out a bar muffed it with his tongs. It rolled hot and threatening at his feet and I saw him raise his arms angrily and throw the tongs after it. I turned back to my swabbing — even strokes, one, two, on a blistered bar — but the glow remained in my mind, and the man who had thrown the tongs.

I sank into my old rhythm and a new vision. In

the midst of a solid glare of copper light, I saw the hot rollers, with hooks in their hands, building a fence out of the incandescent logs. They built a barricade out of them. In front of it flowed a stream of red fire, a molten brook from a burst furnace somewhere. I noticed men get caught by it, a foot, or a hand. It sucked them in when they fell down. The machinery kept on, though broken bits of it were twisted savagely by the rolls, clanging against men and iron. It looked as if the machinery was fighting itself, and the noise was like a boiler mill gone crazy. The men fought with bars and shafts of copper, repelling a charge of guards from the great gate. In the end I negotiated with Mr. Baldwin, suggesting that Drinker be put in charge of the Republic of Copper. I was glad, under the circumstances, to step aside for a man of wider experience. Mr. Baldwin smiled heavily and took my hand.

With the Pole's help, I put a new bar on the wooden reel, and began to swab again. One, two, three, four — an unusually thick bar.

If I ever did talk with President Baldwin, I meditated, I would like to make a few suggestions on standardizing orders, here and there, and take up the whole question of Halsey. Baldwin was wearing a swallow-tail coat. He put his hand on my shoulder — looking at me out of his Yankee eyes. 'Never mind about Sherman,' he said kindly. 'We're open-

ing a branch laboratory at Bowington. Keep your chin up.'

It was necessary to bring a half-dozen coils from the furnaces with a hand truck — which meant waking up. The warped floor boards which bucked the truck every four feet shivered your arms and brain. I returned to the rhythm with my wits alive and riveted on the job. For the first time since I had worked with Mac, I noticed a brass plate sunk into the top of a stanchion. Four characters were visible, and when I rubbed off the oil and dirt I read 1880. For forty-one years since Halsey came, somebody had fought or day-dreamed his way through a sticker's day beside these iron shoulders. I wished there had been a miraculous pyrometer, for taking a chart of the brains over forty years. Development, decay. I thought of the four hundred other persons in the mill at that minute. What had happened to McCarthy's brain, for example — what there was of it — he had been a sticker, he told me for the *first* twenty-one years! It took boys, I noticed, two or three or four to get over a restlessness — like mine. A temporary period of discomfort must be faced — before the comforting coma settled down. 'But, Mr. Baldwin,' I said suddenly, 'this is technically unsound. Is there no way of channeling off brain power and using it for something? As the gaseous portions of coke become the most valuable of by-products?'

An idea to beat Bill's alchemy! I multiplied groups of men by their automatic years and grew dizzy in tonnages of brain waste. Could one tap the brains maybe of stickers and blockers, of Kreck and Cuba? A man came by with a large carbuncle on his nose — Dirty Reed.

Of all the men in the mill, it came to me that Dirty Reed, the contemptible, had alone preserved the complete integrity of his spirit. Dirty Reed alone (of the four hundred) told Halsey what he thought of him, told him brutally, and with oaths in his own kind, and with no backing but recklessness. When Halsey suspended, demoted, or fired him, he was tranquil and genuinely entertained. It meant a change for him inside or outside of the mill. And he inevitably reappeared, some years later, at a rush time and got himself ingeniously restored. It had seemed to all the foremen and finally to Halsey impossible permanently to break or destroy him. In the mill he was uniformly good-humored, and foul-tongued. He reviewed his travels aloud and in secret, and ultimately, when bored, resumed them. 'New mills,' was his dictum, 'new bosses, new women.' His independence and his zest for life remained unimpaired by the 'machine age.'

But the others — I tied a new swab to my oil stick — (thirty a week, a family of four, a ten-hour day, unemployment once in four years) — I thought about them, and about myself.

A war of attrition with the earth, I meditated, to get out of it bread. An old war interrupted now and then by fire, slow or volcanic . . . There are two kinds of people who don't understand *us* — the respectable people and the bright-eyed Utopian.

In the mill there is a sort of death. I can look round and see it in Bill, monkey-faced Aleck, Halsey — any one you want to pick. Or I can look inside myself and see it — something buried in a brief three years. Some men are making a fight against it, and some are giving in easy. Partly it's the old bread war and partly it's another thing, a special skirmish with machines. Whatever it is, we're caught, I concluded. Ultimate victory . . . ultimate defeat?

That evening when I returned from a supper of cold stew at the Badgers', Mrs. Rolfe herself handed me a cablegram at the threshold of the back door. It said: 'Leviathan New York twenty-seventh Olga.' So skeptical was I of Olga's optimism that I had refused myself any emotion over her last two letters and the words, 'Mother is well enough to move.' Unfulfilled hints about coming home had dotted the weariness of eight months and paralyzed my faculty of hope. The cable was a reeling shock of happiness. So numbing and so unexpected that it took a few minutes re-reading to accept and imagine it.

The next seven days held a heavy burden of suspense and unreality. They seemed to express a battle between my maturing stoicism and the promise of future happiness. There were times in the midst of a working coma on the rolls when I simply didn't believe it; there were times when, shrouded thickly and comfortably in mental indifference, I considered this sudden decision of Olga's to return almost an interruption, disconcerting, and a little unkind. There were other times, increasingly more frequent, when the expectation of her return made the days radiant with conscious happiness. Then the drudgeries of the day floated like twigs and shallow boats on the swelling stream of my renewed love. Those times seemed to give a rich enjoyment at the very heart of drudgery, and I didn't want the day to end at all. So, for one reason or another, I passed through that curious week eagerly, but without impatience.

Because the U.C.C. was notoriously finicky about 'lost time,' I notified Halsey, without giving any reason, that I would be absent Friday. He looked at me with his sullen eye that pierced, nevertheless, and said, coughing, 'Give her my love.'

The Leviathan docked at eleven o'clock, and for an hour I tried to pick out three faces among the five thousand that crowded the docks. Olga had written that Haviland had come back to them from

a tour of the East and thought he might sail on the same boat. I grew very weary, after a half-hour's study of the banks of unknown faces, till my attention was caught by an old lady making her way with excruciating slowness onto the gangway and supported by reaching arms. In a second I saw that the arms belonged to Olga and Haviland. The three sidled onto the narrow way, Haviland first, with a French overcoat and a tiny cane tucked under his arm. His head when he looked up made the old eager searching gesture, but every next second he would turn back for a solicitous or encouraging word, I suppose, with Mrs. Bannard. It was certainly she, looking not much worse than when she left, but apparently with a disconcerting loss of her legs. She moved down the gangplank like an old, old lady. Olga's face was invisible behind her mother's shoulder, but it emerged suddenly, with wind-burnt cheeks, lips ready to smile, and eyes that raced past mine twice before I could catch them.

The three moved a little way from the end of the gangway, and I met them. All of us shouted, except Mrs. Bannard, who smiled a little and tottered. She had an odd look in her face of mixed boredom and fright. Olga let go her mother's arm and with an anxious look at her and at Haviland threw her arms around my neck. It was necessary, she said, releasing herself almost breathlessly, to get

her mother into a cab. She immediately directed that we three start at once for the taxi while Haviland remained to face customs officers. In the endless march to the cab station, Mrs. Bannard spoke but once, though she maintained the same smile — a little vague and a little derisive — with which she had first greeted me. After twenty yards of difficult crawling, she straightened suddenly and wrenched both arms from our support.

'Where is my black satchel?' she asked in her old tone of discipline and authority. 'In the stateroom?'

'No, Mother, Austin has it.'

'Harris can go back for it,' she said with absolute finality. 'We will wait.' She had already taken three or four decided and unsupported steps in the direction of the ship. I took my orders from Olga's glance and went back for the satchel. On the rest of the march Mrs. Bannard was silent, but Olga talked about the voyage, about Haviland, about how blessed it was to come home, about how thin I looked. 'How are you, dear, really?' she asked, looking anxiously into my eyes across the grim and smiling face of Mrs. Bannard. At the cab, Mrs. Bannard turned with something of her old charm and affection.

'I feel like a foreigner, Harris, and I want to hear as soon as possible, *all* about America.' She got into the cab quickly and with nobody's assistance.

A mysterious power had prepared the Bannard apartment for our arrival, and when we entered, there was the unmistakable air of its having been lived in, besides the visible presence of a cook and an immemorial Bannard nurse. This cheerful hospitality, I learned later, had been achieved by a cable and Philadelphia aunts, who had, however, at Olga's request, refrained from meeting the boat. Mrs. Bannard retired at once to her bedroom, and we sat down to chops and tea.

It is hard, even for friends and lovers, to catch up after eight months. But on this occasion, over the excellent lunch which the borrowed cook of the aunts prepared, over the wine Olga exhumed from the sideboard, and over Haviland, it wasn't hard at all. We all talked at once, a rich compote of adventure, gossip, philosophy, and violent opinion. Most of Olga's adventures and emotions rooted in Paris, most of Haviland's in Vienna. As for me — I was rather more astonished at my own loquacity than at theirs. I had so much burning information upon my own metallic adventures, on the scandals and politics of Bowington . . .

Haviland ultimately came to the center of conversation, as was to be expected, with his talk on the theater and gorgeous plans for an American Renaissance. He had a play in his trunk called 'The Romantic Vulgarian.'

After we had finished luncheon, he stayed, it seemed to me, longer than he should. Olga and I were both silent. I began to think about him. His suit had been made by a French tailor — and it composed badly, I thought, with his American features. But his ideas were as gorgeous and violent as in the days of Henry the Bourbon. It appeared, however, that something really significant had happened to Haviland: financial adjustments, foreseen, I am told, by the uncanny Henry, had been made in his favor. He told us about them, unfortunately, just as my impatience to be alone with Olga was growing acute. A settlement had been made upon him — I've forgotten whether it was by his uncle or father — provided that he should himself settle for a few years into the family business. It was neither stipulated, nor expected, I believe, that it be for long.

I began to listen, absorbed in Haviland, but troubling myself over a question. How was he to combine this settling business and the dramatic renaissance? How was he to yoke the two beasts together? I framed the question, but he had got on his feet, and had forgotten the subject in the mesmeric approach of a new idea. He began with bent fingers to pluck it out of the air.

'Europe is a hell of a country,' he began, 'a *hell* of a country . . .' It comported with the quality of

his thought that Haviland differentiated solely between continents. Not that he didn't know how, but he liked, you may be sure, the implicit Americanism that called Europe a 'country.' I liked his Americanism. And I went back quickly in glamorous memory to Henry's kitchen. There, by Henry's oil lamp, time and again, he had defended and delighted in America's crudeness. He was doing it now. But it had become, I thought, more of an idea than an emotion. From all he had said of his nine months' stay on the other side, it occurred to me that he enjoyed everything French, everything English, everything Italian, except his idea of enjoying it. But perhaps I was all wrong; it was just an impression. He was plunging on now with corollaries and exceptions.

'In one way,' he stated, sitting down, but keeping himself, so to speak, muscularly within the idea, 'they've got it over us — goddam fundamental, Burnham — they've got peasants! No culture is ultimately possible without peasants!'

Olga interrupted him. I was startled by the excitement of her voice, and at her success in making him listen. 'I know where you got that!' she said, with a laugh, little and eager, making a tiny jump in her chair, like a delighted child. 'Primitive hogs!' she cried.

Haviland paused, and it was possible to see by his

glance at her that he wasn't being interrupted, but was following her face into the mid-stream of his memory. The memory swelled and finally embodied his idea, which came out in a torrent.

'Every American should go to Spain!' he shouted. This seemed addressed to the public. 'We walked a week in the Pyrenees,' he continued to me — 'primitive stuff — they live in terrific simplicity, like the ancient Iberian — primitive mountains, primitive huts, primitive hogs — God! how primitive those hogs were! All Catalan, and primitive as hell — but the wine; do you remember the wine, Olga? Kept in goat gourds, Harris, and always tasting just a snick, *goat*.'

Then followed a story of tripper adventure in northern Spain which at first I was quite unable to mesh into Haviland's explosive notions — philosophic and explosive — on the culture of Europe. But I did at last with Olga's help. They had started, it seemed, with Mrs. Bannard and her nurse derelict somewhere in the Roussillon — to walk in the eastern Pyrenees. The idea had come from a school friend of Olga's — a strong-willed individual, expatriate and unescorted. The school friend had drafted Olga and Haviland as convenient companions. She had overcome the objections of Mrs. Bannard. She had led them into the heart of Andorra.

'That town was old — as hell,' said Haviland,

with the look of memory in his eyes, 'and Andorra has never had any history.'

I learned that the town was Soldeu, a tiny hamlet of forty people with a truly 'primitive' inn, not far from the French border. And I remembered all about Andorra, as Haviland spoke. It was the smallest republic in the world, and *had* as a matter of fact quite a history.

'It was wild,' said Olga, stretching the word to cover everything.

With Haviland's imagination all stirred up by the primitive mountains, they took lodging in the village. At this point, Olga continued the narrative. They had gone into a stone hut, she said, crouching under the lee of a Pyrenean cliff. For two pesetas each a wizened and kindly woman agreed to provide bed and board for a day, and Olga, with lively strokes, proceeded to sketch the achievements of that extraordinary peasant. They had sat in the kitchen while the woman cooked — cooked a meal for the four of them and for nine laborers, Haviland's peasants, out of *one* pot. Not in a fireplace, but upon a hearth let into the floor — the immemorial fireplace of all primitive races — with a hole in the roof for the escape of smoke.

'Then as we ate the family came in,' she said.

'Besides the nine?' I asked.

'Yes,' she answered, 'four tall and unfattened

hogs. They didn't eat with us, though,' she added, 'just moved around intimate and conversational.'

'For more than three thousand years,' said Haviland, with elbows on his knees and knuckles at his chin, 'the peasants of Europe have lived along on the soil, perfectly happy.'

'You never thought of that till the pigs came!' she cried, giving that same laugh, tiny and eager, as before. He looked at her, but his mind continued to look at the remote mountains of Andorra and their immemorial peasantry.

'He worked it all out, riding on donkeys back into France. But you see, in America,' she continued seriously, looking at Haviland for his correction, 'we haven't any people who are primitive and ignorant, living on the soil, century after century. It's the soil——' she continued.

Haviland seemed to approve. 'No culture is ultimately possible without peasants,' he repeated and developed his thought.

I found that through all of this, I grew acutely indifferent to Haviland's philosophy. But my listening to all of it was eager and feverish. I was caught by Olga's old gift of recalling a scene or a person, like that peasant cooking, with a flavored word, or gesture. I thought of the number of times she had done it for *me*. What a sharp cameo she made of the little adventure, and how characteristically Haviland had

settled over it with his violent and grandiose egoism! But around that egoism her warm sympathy had wrapped itself — a comfortable cloak with the warmth of tenderness, and the comfort of submission. And he had taken it with such an easy welcome. The cloak lay over his shoulders.

I suffered a curious experience as I watched, and listened to them. Their presence was with me so nearly that it seemed to place even their bodies inside my consciousness. Even when I was looking, not at them, but steadfastly at the floor. Even when I was listening only to my own thoughts. You see, I knew Olga and Austin. I had *realized* them a great many times . . . So the scene had the effect of one of those perfervid dreams which are more vivid and impressive than reality because all of the elements that make for vividness and 'reality' are present in the same instant, with none of the limiting obscurities of an actual world. But, though I held them in my mind in a very poignant realization — Olga's chin, and Haviland's shoulders, that suggested the firm breast muscles under his French coat — I felt I wasn't in the same room with them at all. Not at least as a person — who could answer a question, or be shaken by the hand. I felt incorporeal, but with every organ of perception and thought.

Suddenly Haviland looked at his watch. 'It's three o'clock,' he said, 'and I apologize.'

This brought me quickly into the room almost with a snap. I became Haviland's friend and Olga's fiancé.

'I'm supposed to be seeing my uncle,' he added.

In the tiny pause, before Haviland rose, before, in fact, he had put his watch back, a voice came out of the adjacent room. It was an irritated voice, moral and authoritative; it sounded wonderfully close by.

'Austin, before you go, will you bring that large black hamper into my room; it's too heavy for Olga.'

There was something thoroughly unmanning in this abrupt command of the invalid to Austin Haviland that lingered in the air, even after he had left for his uncle's office.

Austin rose and carried the black bag into Mrs. Bannard's room. Returning, he made some joke about the anger of his uncle and went quickly away.

For a half-hour I had been thinking about kissing Olga at this expected instant, but she turned to me where we stood at the door, and with both arms on my shoulders kissed me gently on the lips, looking into my eyes with her own wide. She then sat down on the couch and said, 'Oh, Harris!' We sat there very quietly, talking about, oh, I don't know, her mother, the mill routine, trifling things that had happened to both of us. And we didn't speak of the marriage. I saw with terrible relief that the anxieties

of the journey had made no assault on her body's health, and her beauty, it seemed to me, had ripened and bloomed. Perhaps when she was more delicate a year ago, the beauty of her body seemed less earthly, but now it had become calm, rich, and unconquerable. I wondered if the poise that was in her arose from new health or from some change spiritual and secret, of which I knew nothing.

After dinner she gave me a richer tenderness than I had known. And yet when she moved, or sat for a moment under the lamp alone, she seemed to go from me into a spiritual retreat.

In the course of the evening, we looked at three photographs of Andorra, one of the inn, one of the peasant woman, one of the pigs. They were 'tall and thin,' I agreed. She laughed lightly at them and put them away.

In the end, when I took her into my arms before saying 'good-night,' I put into words a fear that I had managed till then to shut out of thinking altogether. I held her from me, trying to erase from my senses the beauty of her body that had become absolute.

'Nothing counts, Olga, but your loving me,' I said. 'You're free — I mean, free to love me ——' I trembled a little before I could hold my body still.

'I have come back — to you,' she said, in a clear, untroubled voice, and kissed me.

Those words, spoken with such calm and promptitude, I invested with all the need for love and assurance in my soul. They became fervid and tender. I hugged them to me as the willing bond of a love, lately grown sacred and indissoluble. I re-lived them, and the delirious moment after; I repeated them, and closed my eyes to re-see her face more clearly as she spoke them.

But I had lived no longer than it took me to climb into the Bowington train, half an hour after midnight, than I began to experience my fears in acute and more ingenious forms. On the train they grew and reënforced themselves for the short and hideous night I spent in Bowington, and later returned upon me in the mill. My coma of comfortable routine had departed forever. The love that remained in my soul found rest — and then only for a moment or two — in the most extreme of judgments. There can be no doubt, I said to myself, that Olga loves me. How else explain her arms, her hands upon me — how else explain the evening, and those words, swiftly and tenderly given, and the kiss. Again, she loves Haviland — and upon that thesis I summoned the awful memories of that Andorran intimacy — How much, I asked myself, has been left untold? As she sat under the lamp, of what was she thinking? Of whom? As she kissed me! But the futility of such torture pressed itself into my reason. I tried to ex-

plain, by collating coolly, all the facts of the mystery that lay at the heart of Olga's homecoming. The solution, mortifying and terrible, presented itself that she had 'come back' to me, obeying her honor. She was wedding, perhaps, out of the purity of her conscience — or out of the depths of her compassion.

Although these thoughts gave me material for violent suffering, I did not rest in them. To a judgment that had cooled a little in two days' routine, they appeared to me ridiculous. Something had happened to Olga's love — some sea-change, but pity and conscience were not the answer. That answer in searching my excited thoughts I was unable to find, but I found a hardy sort of substitute. A mounting and furious resolution to reawaken — if that was *it* — her old love, to bind her certainly and forever to me. To win her — that was it — by a passion in her own soul she could never abandon and Haviland could never break.

In those days my resentment toward Haviland ebbed and flowed. I admitted that he had committed no crime, but if he succeeded in winning Olga's love, I hated him. Anger, I believe, actually heats the body temperature, and I felt feverish, as I sat at my oil pail and thought that it was I who suggested Haviland. Suggested that he look after Olga during the 'three or four' tedious weeks of her mother's convalescence.

The other day after Haviland left, Olga and I had made plans to spend the next week-end at her uncle's house. It was in the country — an hour's run from New York — and we would be 'all to ourselves' except for the housekeeper and servants. And now, in the midst of oil smears and rolling, and at the close of each bout of anger and emotion, I returned to that thought and drank from it thirstily. I would take the ten o'clock train Friday.

On Wednesday there occurred one of those minor accidents of fortune that require — for the normal mind — no further explanation than Chance. Chance in a routine, not an extraordinary day's work. But for the abnormal mind — and mine in its excitement had certainly been that since Friday — it was the sort of stroke for which another explanation is sought. It is usually supposed by persons in the state in which I found myself that small accidents — the inferior doings of Chance — are tied into a much grander design than is apparent, that Destiny, in a word, has a finger in it, maleficent or helpful. That was certainly what I thought on Wednesday, though all that happened, as I think it over, was quite explicable on the most ordinary grounds.

The easier and lighter parts of my job during those days were the most intolerable. Heavy trucking and

lunging bars into the bite the easiest. But that is a phenomenon any one will understand. Arduous labor has long been a sound refuge for the mind. Especially if the labor be painful or a little dangerous.

I was grateful to Halsey when on Wednesday morning he found me a job near the annealing furnaces that at any other time I'd have hated him for. It was unloading the cooked copper. The squat mammoths would open their mouths, and a long tray of round coils like flaming cakes be drawn out of them. We piled them up, using long tongs for it, and loaded another tray for the throat of the furnace. It wasn't as roasting as steel, but it was a heavy business, and the coils were always a dull red from the heat when we piled them. At eleven o'clock I made a pile near the hot rolls, and found Rakhofsky, that tireless Russian, working beside me. As the tortured snake of red copper broke twisting through the groove of one pair of rolls, he would seize it methodically with tongs, and poke its rebellious head into another. A wave of heat from the red-hot bars at his feet broke over me as I watched him. I was feeling uneasy and a little angry at the last coil which had slipped out of my tongs and burnt a tiny blister on my foot. My trousers stuck uncomfortably to my wet legs and the sweat ran into the burn and scalded it. There would certainly be time for two more piles before noon.

Past Rakhofsky's shoulder by a great bank of cold bars, I could see men talking. Two men with overcoats. They had their hands in their pockets, holding the coats back. One man's face was turned away from me. Both had neckties, stiff collars, and felt hats. I could only see them obscurely — there was steam in the air — but one was an official of the Company.

I thought I would pick up my tongs and start on the last two piles. I chose a fat coil, and dug the tongs into it, holding it tight. Both of the men laughed. I looked up at them. They were not laughing at me. They weren't even looking at the hot rolls. One of the two, the official of the Company, walked nearer; I could see him come, laughing and bending over.

I hated the two men in the coats, especially the other one who had made the joke. But I also hated the official. I thought I would go over and give the tongs to the first one and see what he would do. It would be worth it. I relaxed my tight hold on the tongs, and stood sweating. Then my eyes fell on Rakhofsky. He stood poised ready to pick up the end of the red bar. It twisted at his feet, but he had turned his head and was watching the men laugh. I could see the wet short hairs on the back of his neck, as he twisted. When he brought his head around, I saw his face in a little light from the bar. There was

hate in it; the eyes burned, and the lips were skinned back. All the time the bar slapped round his feet, wrenching out of the groove, needing to be stuck in again before it got wild. Rakhofsky stuck it in. He lifted its head with his tongs, methodically, and stuck it in. When he turned for the next bar, I saw his face. It was just the way it had always been, expressionless, save for his awful attention to the job of rolling copper.

Seeing Rakhofsky, seeing the moment's hate in his face that was like an animal's, made me think. 'It is ridiculous,' I said to myself, 'to get mad at those men. What grudge have I got against them?' I thought of what had gone through my head when I saw them. It was this: 'What right have they to stand there and watch *us?* Let them take my tongs awhile; let them take my tongs!' But that was ridiculous. The Company official, without doubt, worked all morning at something hard and useful. I reasoned it out and felt civilized.

Still I thought, picking up the tongs, there was that first minute with its hot hate when Rakhofsky and I would have thrown them both into the furnaces.

At this point, the first man who had walked to the other side of the rolls laughed again. The sound strangely stirred my resentment and my fears. It sounded to me like Haviland laughing, Haviland

laughing at me! I felt at once seriously concerned for the state of my nerves, put the tongs down and began to walk. The fatigue of the week, the physical and mental fatigue, had evidently done for me. The sanest thing, I thought, would be to walk right over to the men themselves. I felt myself shudder. Inside my head it was still Haviland.

I stepped back of the hot rolls where the two stood and my heart leaped. I must have been perfectly white. One of the men *was* Haviland. He wore his French coat and his cane and he was smiling delightedly. There was no doubt about it. I was immensely relieved when I shook hands with him, and reëstablished the integrity of my senses — he had come on to see me from New Haven — but a new tide of disturbed feelings swept through me. It was the tide that had been storing for the last four days.

'I came to New Haven yesterday,' said he, 'and when I missed my train this morning by four minutes, I thought it worth an hour's run to come over and see you in your hell hole.' He laughed again.

This was the rational explanation of the 'chance event'— but I was unwilling to accept it. I laughed, took hold of his arm, walked with him, and disbelieved.

At twelve o'clock we went to lunch at Mrs. Badger's. If it be true, I thought, that Austin has put himself between Olga and me — and I am damn

sure he has — the sooner the three of us clear up the thing, the better it'll be, won't it? I shan't sit back and fool around.

'When are you going to take a vacation?' he asked.

'This week-end,' said I, and, thinking it out right then, I told him he must come and spend the last evening with us — Sunday next. And I persuaded him, telling him that Olga had suggested it. I had no clear plans for action, beyond the conviction that there must be some, and that the only way to get it was to put the three of us into the same spot quickly. As quickly as possible.

'Sunday night, seven o'clock dinner,' I repeated, as I left him for the afternoon shift.

CHAPTER X

THE DUEL

DURING the week between my meeting of Olga and the 'crisis' I premeditated for the following Sunday, the air was filled with premonitions of a bad future for the whole mill. Expectation of disaster had long hung in the air like a marsh fever, but that week rumors of a wage cut whipped up active resentment. Whether the cut would kindle another bloody strike like the last, or whether unemployment would bludgeon the men over, no one knew.

On the afternoon of Haviland's visit, Bill gave me during the noon hour an account of the last strike.

It had been a forest fire business that had swept up the valley enclosing in a flame of rebellion every metal works in the State. In this very room, that had seen rolls turning in their stanchions since 1881, the spark had spluttered first among the slitters, those chaps scarcely visible now through the steamy air under the north windows. Mills in other cities in the valley had already exploded — the workmen had left their machines, gone into the street and rioted. But Tarleton had said flatly, 'all along,' that it was impossible in Bowington. The men would con-

tinue to work, 'loyally.' At ten o'clock among the slitters it began to be possible. Fifteen or twenty folded up their overalls, got their street boots from the locker, and moved toward the drying-out machines and the pickle tubs. Those fifteen proceeded, like smouldering leaves under a light wind. They talked and argued, and cajoled and swore, at the drying-out men. They upset the stools of the slackers-out. The drying-out men followed them, the slackers-out hesitated and at last came with them. They charged the drawn-copper men like a gust of flaming air. The mill turned into a confused battle among roaring machines, but the rollers stayed in their places. Then into the mass threading between the pickle tubs and the rolls — into the midst of these enemy trenches — Tarleton stepped. He stood upon a slacking-out table — 'I have never seen a man go crazy mad before,' said Bill. For Tarleton was heartbroken, insulted, and angry, all in one. 'He commanded the men to get back to their places. He threatened them with court and imprisonment, and the sack, and hell.' He went outside and bolted the mill door. As he was speaking, the mill guards bolted the great northwest door, and when he finished, a shout of rage went up. Great masses of hunkies charged the door and broke it. And then in the mill yard there was a battle of rocks.

In the fighting, Bill told me, a man was killed — a

striker. So that after that the walk-out was complete, for strikers' processions were held, and the corpse carried upon strikers' shoulders, with a strike flag before and behind them. The dead striker's body became at once the motive and the banner of battle. The first flags said, 'Strike for Freedom,' and the second, 'Strike against slavery and murder.' As Bill was speaking, I traced with my eyes the lines along the floor and amongst the heavy machinery where the van of the slitters had recoiled and charged again.

During every hour from Monday to Thursday I had a strong sense of an explosive poison seeking an outlet from men's nerves. My Polish helper talked strike, men dropped the lightest of bars, and trucks collided with suspicious frequency as they moved down the aisle of the rolls. I felt as I looked about me the stuff of which strikes are made. To melt the crust of numbness, I thought, in three days' battle would be worth hell.

On Thursday the infant of revolution died unborn and inarticulate in the womb. At five-thirty, we were paid off. In a long line, we waited to get our two by four envelopes from the paymaster. He had a little desk-table under the time clock, and opened his padlocked cash bag upon it.

Somebody at the head of the line fumbled and dropped a yellow slip — the first lay-off. The line

was silent. Then two men at the other end moved their feet and coughed. A silent and interior violence was taking the place of revolution. Unemployment had set in.

I arrived at the Bannard estate on a late afternoon train, Friday, and for the next two days Olga and I walked about wet fields — it was April — or stood on the tiny bridges over torrential brooks. She led the way, moving with a bodily release that was new to me, walking in her Scotch skirt and loose chamois coat. Suddenly, pushing away a branch, or twisting back to smile, the loose chamois would take easily the mould of her breast. I loved her, walking. This new bloom, which was more than just April come round, and the ripe poise of it, made me want to win her quickly and made me shy at it.

I asked about Paris, but not about Spain — and I asked about all the people she met, but not about Haviland. Then I told her of the mill, finding it possible to put moods into words, to give the lives of workmen, and to tell about the character of machines. 'The men treat the rolls like people,' I said, 'and will say: "Those pony rolls 'as a 'ate for me this morning." *I* shall be doing it soon,' I said.

She didn't ask me any questions, but I knew she was listening. She had a walk that listened, and by her looking back.

I told her about the company she used to keep me on the rolls, in the midst of the oil smears, and the loose breathing board of the housing, and the copper in a shriek passing through. I told her about going to Hilda Benton, and how it failed after a little. The dark girl I described from the 'fine wire' mill, who walked prettily between copper scrap. I told her how in imagination I had furnished the house in which we were going to live, with its slanted ceiling, and the green wall-paper in the bedroom. I seemed to be able to talk better than I had in my letters.

I told her I had been made a roller for a little while, but it didn't mean anything. There is no chance for promotion in the mill, without drag, I said. You will wait years and years. I know men who have, dry-rot.

'I think I had better break away,' I said emphatically, 'and take up a new line. I know a number of openings.'

She turned her head quickly.

'No,' she said, in a low tone, 'don't do that.'

'Why?' I asked her, startled. It was as if she had been thinking about it, a long time.

'Because you wouldn't be happy,' she said.

Those words of hers made a period in our talk. We went on in silence, through the brush of a pine grove, getting thoroughly wet. And only slowly did we

start talk again, by way of general subjects and the symptoms of her mother's convalescence.

More than ever, that afternoon and evening, and all the next day, which was Sunday, the new bloom of her beauty and the poise of it delighted and stirred me. We sat talking in the drawing-room Sunday afternoon like new friends. We were each shyly, and a little cautiously, exploring the personality of the other. She seemed to me like a forest which I was trying to enter, but I couldn't find any broken place or pathway in. Then she opened one, quite unwittingly, I think. She said something which led deviously but certainly to the heart of our memories. To the trembling presence of our common past that had walked beside us waiting to be addressed all day. She was recalling the effect the streets of Paris had on her when she first saw them. 'They made me feel I remembered,' she said. 'I suppose that happens to Americans, but I know it's deeper than just having been told about them. It was the same with cathedrals and country-sides. I *remembered* the way Chartres *felt*, and Burgos.'

'I get that in England,' I said, 'from the streets in London; from the pubs ——'

She looked to see if I laughed at her. 'Have you a theory?' she asked.

'No,' I answered. 'I was going to say racial memory, but you're "remembering" all over Europe like that ——"

'I've just got a long memory,' she said. She was silent, and began after a little in a new tone. 'I always remember idiotic thoughts I've had a dozen years ago, if I come back to the same place again. Do you remember the "Doughnut Kitchen?"'

'Yes,' I said.

'We went there only once, three years ago, and I remember that we talked about Chinese and American food.'

'So do I. Whenever I go past the Bowington Inn, I always think of the steam pipes your mother hated, and the chambermaids.'

She laughed and imitated her mother. It suggested two or three more scenes with Mrs. Bannard. To begin with, carrying her struggling down the ladder stairs, the night after I had been promised a raise. 'I had the worst end of her,' she said, 'with her kicking me furiously, but it did Mother a world of good. Nobody had ever carried her downstairs before.'

'Whenever I see the lights of four or five signs in New Haven,' I began, 'that make themselves into a wobbly "W" I think of that night ——'

'Yes,' she answered, 'our queer constellations . . .'

In this way we moved by the smallest steps — retreating and advancing again — to the heart of our memories. As I think back upon it now, I see that there was an instinct in me pushing to this crisis. An

instinct that was both wary and relentless. I never let the past come forth and baffle or defy her — though it hung there, ready to do so. I would never let it lift up the body of our love — and say, 'Here it is. Here you are. You cannot cut away from this.' For then — my instinct told me — she would either defy me or, if she yielded, shuddering, the love would not be worth anything to either of us. Out of my egoism, and my suffering too, I drew in the net of our memories — but I also begged her to come into them. I hoped that she wished to be caught. I prayed hard, indeed, that she had never been free.

She sat near to me, her shoulder meeting mine in breathing, her chin raised, and the memories going past in her eyes.

'I went into a room the other day with a bare floor,' I said, 'and an empty table . . . the rug was rolled up and pushed against the wall. . . . Two or three times that's happened to me,' I said, 'a bare floor ——'

I went on thinking but not speaking of the soft light of the lamp on her beauty — the stripped, desolate apartment on the eve of the sailing, the awful civil war of our loves that night, and the final experience in ecstasy.

I looked at her, and saw her lips open, and close upon some broken word —

'What is it?' I lifted the words out of a well. 'Tell me what you were thinking.'

'I was thinking,' she said, 'how many questions I asked you that night . . .' She said that trembling as if it had broken her heart. 'You had a little cut on your middle finger,' she whispered, with a sob, and trembling flung herself upon me to cling to my neck and shoulders. She wept bitterly — for what I could only guess.

I walked down the muddy road to the tiny railroad station for the six-ten train. Haviland would be on it. The minutes in which I had held Olga in my arms had given me no certainty or sure hope, but a curious calm had come out of it, greater than any I had known in the whole history of our love. The warm hatred against Haviland which for a week had occupied so many hours was gone. That I had vaguely contemplated some violent action during his visit, I am certain. But what it could have been is inconceivable to me. There were no instruments, except pitchforks, that could have been utilized in our extremity. Had I thought of the matter quickly enough in Bowington, I might readily have hurled him into the hot rolls, or he me, but that opportunity had slipped. The matter of my hating and blaming him seemed to me now unjust and a little ridiculous. I was able to listen to his boisterous and blasphemous stories on the walk up on the muddy road with

interest and my old friendliness. I even looked forward to dinner. Olga, of course, was prepared. I had told her of his coming on our first morning, trying to make it a little matter, but with mental excitement and speculating as to what she thought. She had looked up quickly, and said, 'Be sure to make him talk about Persia.' Only that.

Despite my calm, though, and the reëstablished friendship, I had no intention that we three should meet without a crisis. I suppose my ideas were still sufficiently fantastic. Nothing, I mused, will happen at dinner, which must be pleasant and boisterous like the apartment luncheon. The crisis will come afterward. I am not sure now just how I premeditated that. Whether I expected actually to turn to Olga and say: 'It is now for you, finally and forever, to choose between us.' In my unnatural state of mind, unnatural though calm, it is quite conceivable that just such fantastic dramatics would have appealed. My memories of what I planned are confused. But I am sure I had the conviction that this intolerable period of unreality must end. I felt somehow the crisis ought to come in the open with all parties present, and as calm and coherent as could be. I know that there was no secret conviction in me that this — under the guise of elaborate justice — would be merely a parade of victory. Nor was there the inverted desire of egoism to display my fortitude,

while being stepped on and dismissed. I was genuinely and poignantly uncertain of my fate. We sat down to dinner at seven-fifteen. The crisis — or whatever it was — I estimated for eight-thirty — after the coffee.

The dinner was pleasant and Persia exciting through the violent medium of Austin's metaphysics. After it, we stood with coffee cups in our hands between the fireplace and an immense leather-covered couch. The hearth was nearly as long as the couch, and consumed a daily fortune from the Bannard woodlots. It was fun, though, to let it light the room, and we stood for several minutes poking the fire, and watching the fingers of shadow play up the walls and creep among the bare rafters.

'We shall need more wood,' said Olga, so that I went out for an armload. Haviland was arranging the fire.

When I came back with the first load, I heard him going upstairs. I made two more trips, and when I had finished piling up the wood, Olga leaned toward me from the couch. I stood with my back to the new blaze.

'Harris,' she said, 'I don't love you, because you've never allowed it.'

I looked down at her on the couch, and she seemed to me to gleam there with intense and living light against the dark leather. She wore a perfectly white

gown, except for a dark girdle. Her hair shone, and she spoke in a tone that was pure and gleaming, like her dress.

'I have tried to love you, over and over again. I used to come, bringing my love to you, warm, and begging, but you didn't want it. I tried it over and over again. I got to see how you liked me at last. It was when I wasn't trying. There were times, dear, when I seemed to succeed, when we both did, in loving each other. Oh, my dear! But it always came back — the struggle — to love you — to make you let me. I could see you trying too. I watched you — trying to take the love I was bringing you. Your eyes would suffer, and you would begin to give yourself up and then fail. After a while, I knew why. It was because you were in love already. Not with a woman, dear, but with something inside you were jealous of. It was something you couldn't give me, and I couldn't understand. Everybody has an individuality he can't break into, but this was different. It was something passionate that wanted you, like a woman.'

'If the mill ——' I began.

'Harris,' she said, interrupting gently and painfully, 'there are two kinds of women, I think, you might fall in love with. One would be the kind who understood this life in you, having it in herself somewhere. She would talk back to you, and you

would fall in love with her, I think. The other would be a woman who despised *that* you, or was indifferent. She would have a life of her own, that wasn't yours. I can't do any of those things. I can't understand you, dear, and I can't despise you. I can only try to love you, which isn't enough.' I tried to push myself into speech, or to take her hands or her knees. Then suddenly I thought that all this time Haviland was absent. Perhaps it was a creaking step I imagined on the stair, or the mere silence that had fallen after Olga's voice which put into my head the personality of Haviland, and his significance.

'You see, I wouldn't have cared what you did to me,' she began again, 'if you had really *taken* me. I wouldn't have cared if you had laughed at me, when I didn't understand. Only, if you hadn't been distressed, and kind. I wanted to understand, dear, but it wasn't important; it was only important because you thought it was. If you had just grunted or laughed, or made me ridiculous and loved me. I didn't care what sort of thing I was, but you always treated me like a queen or nobody — I couldn't love you, that way.'

Standing motionless there in front of the bright logs, and hearing that voice come up to me quite lucid and relentless, I felt that my soul had been killed gently. I looked at myself with a power of detachment, perfected and terrifying, like a patient

permitted to observe the steps of an operation on himself.

Then suddenly I began to argue, though my mind was a wet sweeping of ashes.

'How could it be that I wasn't loving you, Olga, or you me, when I was living on you, on your love, for years — and you,' a cold hard fear throttled me, but there was a fuel in me that kept my words crazy and true, 'and you, by God! Olga, you lived on me! Suppose the love we had was fumbling and — we could find it more and more if we went on. How, oh God! how can we not go on ——'

She broke in on me with a sudden tenderness.

'Oh, Harris,' she cried, 'you will be lonely, dear, but not desperately, not *hopelessly* lonely. As I would be if I married you. The other won't let you. I know that — though my heart aches for you. For I love you — as much as I can. And you love me — as much as you can. This other is a little horrible. It makes you, oh, I don't know, but it makes you a little terrible. And it may kill you.'

'Yes,' I said.

'Oh, my dear,' she answered and was silent.

'Something has happened, something in the last three years,' she began slowly, 'that isn't your fault — none of it is your fault, dear, and yet I think all of it is too. Oh, I can't say it. But in the last three years something that used to be lovely isn't you.

The three years have killed it. Oh, why do I say these things! My dear!'

Suddenly there seemed to be nothing of Olga's voice in my mind, not a tone or a syllable.

I crouched clumsily and took her hands.

'Oh, Olga,' I whispered, 'I love you.'

She looked at me steadily. 'I know you do,' she said. 'Days and hours, but best of all when I am going away.'

She turned her head swiftly and I saw her eyes as they passed mine; it seemed to me that for an instant there was in them the whole exquisite citadel of her soul.

She looked at me, her lips quivering and her eyes deep and startled. Suddenly she dropped them and rose to smile at me. 'There are so many hours in the day,' she said.

We walked out into the hall, and when we reached the foot of the stairs, she answered my thought the instant it came. 'Austin,' she said, 'left for New York on the nine-fifteen.'

I spent the next day in walking — chiefly about the Battery and along the streets with which I was familiar on the East Side. And in my mind, I visited all the familiar streets of our love, besieging my brain from an inexhaustible armory of hypothesis and accusation. Whether it was the circumstance

of her mother's illness, or my character, or the eternal rolls that had killed our love and me, I don't know. But it was the mill which I hated as the murderer. All through my endless walk, I resolved that I would never go back to it.

It would perhaps have been a temporary comfort to have known that Haviland was himself at that time walking about the streets of New York like myself. She had dismissed him, when I went out for wood, sent him packing, in fact, on the nine-fifteen train with no promise or hint of her mind whatever. It was nearly a week later before she went herself to his apartment and gave herself up, as she put it, to a man who 'allowed her to love him.'

On Tuesday I went back to Bowington, still hating the mill, and resolved not to go back to it. But that night, I put the alarm at five-thirty. Halsey, when I presented myself at the tin office, restored me with quiet blasphemy to McCarthy's rolls.

CHAPTER XI

STAGNANT REVOLUTION

Two weeks after I had returned in subdued despair to the making of copper, a clerk in the United Copper Company's employment office was transferred West, and the job was instantly given to me. I am unable to explain it. Perhaps Destiny acting independently of me decided that I had had enough of rolls. Possibly Mr. Tarleton in a spasm of memory had recalled my shop-worn drag with Sherman. I don't know. I was quite indifferent to the jump at the time.

Inside me the succession of images that made me continuously aware of my loss had ceased. It was replaced by a physical sensation that like an invisible injury reminded me only that it would be painful to move. It told me that it would be impossible to move, or rather that nothing I succeeded in doing would be worth anything. After a while this state became disrupted. I had premonitions that the business wasn't over, that the love I bore for Olga had a future, if only a bad one. Out of this uncertainty, I tried to scoop comfort. If it isn't over, I may win her yet, I said — or a part of her. But this never went down with me quite. All that uncer-

tainty did for me really was to keep loneliness alive.

I began my new job on a Monday in offices at the apex of a three-cornered building, one half of which was garage. When the six company trucks left the building in the morning, scores of hunkies looking for work flowed in and pressed all day against the door of the office. For months, my job was to sit at a desk, copying reductions in wage rates. There was all but no hiring to be done, so the employment office helped out the paymaster on wage work. Cuts in pay fell upon one department after another, and served to increase the sense of approaching disaster. Instinctively I shared this feeling with the men around me, and associated it half consciously with my personal fears. Something of the feeling of change, vast and unpredictable, that every one had in the early years after the war, came over me.

The will to violence which the last strike had kindled was dead, but this stagnation that had overtaken the mill seemed to me to be working in men's nerves a deadlier change than all the blood-letting of revolution.

My new job, I discovered, was physically very pleasant and comfortable. Walking into it from the steamy, rough-edged atmosphere of the mill, I seemed to have entered a new snug world characterized by clean floors and immense security. There were oak desks with blotters and ink bottles, com-

fortable rotating chairs, and a green wall of card files in the front office. Out of the office were two doors, one to the garage, one to the street, leading to decaying benches across the way, and through both filtered when allowed, the candidates for jobs. There was a piece of scoured floor space for them to mill about in, and the rest of the office lay behind a rail where Miss Kibbe typed and where I sat at a new desk copying wage reductions onto enormous charts. Behind this front office was the employment manager's sanctum. His name was Kenwick, and in that inner room he spent his days in obscure clerical pursuits. All along the wall dividing our room from the sanctum were green cabinets. They were the personnel archives of United Copper, and appalled me by their mountainous immensity and acid powers for saving or condemning the characters of men. Their main division, I found, was between those employees who remained actively with the Company, and those who had passed on, industrially speaking. So the green drawers fell into the Dantesque division of Living and Dead. Of these, as I recall, the live green drawers were eight in number, the dead thirty-six.

Every morning Mr. Kenwick would go out into the garage and tell the men standing around that there were no jobs to be had. They would stare at him for a minute and then go outside and lounge the

rest of the day on a bank of rotten benches across the street.

A good many men of all trades came to us in those days looking for jobs. I remember an electrician who visited us three times a week from Bridgeport. I grew ashamed to look him in the face. We were still laying off electricians and this lad had been out of work a year. He would stand facing me across the rail, grinning at his luck and tossing his cap in the air.

An Italian, named Benevento, had come every morning for three months. He showed his teeth in a gleaming smile and always brought his wife with him, an undernourished woman who was still handsome. We had no job to give him.

In this way several months passed, when I received a letter from Olga announcing her engagement to Haviland and asking me to the wedding. The letter brought me no surprise and singularly little agitation. I had the feeling that it might be a help to me in killing my ridiculous premonitions. I sat down and wrote her that I couldn't get away to the wedding, but wished her everlasting happiness. I tried to think how to end it up casually: 'If you and Austin ever motor through the valley,' I wrote, 'come to see me. We'll talk about the dramatic renaissance. I've got new ideas.' Then I mailed the letter and went back to work on wage charts.

One day a singular thing happened to one of the men looking for work. His name was Cordovan, a reserved, responsible, little man. 'I have worked as a machinist for thirty-two years,' he said, 'never sick a day.' He was amazingly self-contained, but a few days later he went to pieces, not slowly, but sharply, like a corroded wire. He had come into the office the previous week, in a neat suit, asking quietly for work, but that morning he appeared without a shirt, and with the betraying safety pin at the neck of his coat collar. 'What are you trying to do,' he said belligerently, 'starve me, is that it?' He went out into the garage and fell down on the gasoline pump, and after a gasp, became sick all over it. He had been subsisting on somebody's whiskey for days. After a struggle with the pump and when his stomach had given up its deluge, he moved over to the wall of the garage and, rolling his face against it, wept.

Before I could reach him, two hunkies were carrying him hastily to the decaying benches across the road. There after a few minutes I saw him get up slowly and with his chin high move off unsteadily and alone.

I turned back to the garage to tell the jobless hunkies to go home. Perhaps a hundred and twenty were standing behind that door that led to the office. Two or three eager ones, an American and two

Slavs, with their teeth shining, began taking short steps around me, nervously on tiptoe. The others were distributed about in knots and bunches. Against the raw brick wall, on which drops of moisture shone, several leaned, with their heads pointed downward to the floor. When I came in, they lifted their eyes. A good many stood in groups of four or five, but not talking, with their feet spread wide apart — I noticed how the legs of a tall Greek sloped inward at the knees — and the rest sat upon a bundle of beams beside a wrecked truck.

For a long time I saw no one, but only an assemblage of leaning and sitting bodies, and felt their eyes. The garage was a little dim, and I stood looking steadily for a few moments before I spoke. I looked into the faces of six men, whose names I didn't know but whose faces have become, against every effort, part of my brain's furnishing. They were confused faces, slackened as if the cord that had been holding them into human unity had snapped. What should be done, I speculated, to make them right? A drawing the lips together, remoulding the chin? Their faces were muddy roads, I concluded, over which trucks had been sloughing and rutting all winter. I began to be conscious how long I had been looking at the six, and I said to myself: 'Take their names and go inside. There are two hours of wage charts ahead of you; with special rates in red ink.' At the

same time I continued to look and to find my way about among the faces.

Suddenly the Italian named Benevento appeared at my elbow. His hat, which I remembered for its jauntiness, was crushed in his hand. The bones showed in his face, which was incredibly thin; but over the bones the blood burned. He lifted his arms and hands tensely, and then, as if thinking better of the gesture, released them to fall anyway they would.

His voice had anger in it, fever and despair. At the same time, it was cutting and had not passed over the border of self-respect.

'Why don't you give me a job?' he said. 'I rot.'

Several days later I went into Mr. Kenwick's sanctum to put a completed wage chart on his desk and to get another. Since joining the staff of the little office, I felt an odd conviction that to this man, efficient, submissive, and clerical, my own fate was closely joined. I began to wonder about him. In the face of the quiet comforts and brutalities of the office, what would be his temper and his mind? Three squares of paper, red, blue, and yellow, were laid out on his blotter, and he looked down at them with a gaze in which there was seriousness and intellectual contentment. 'I ran across Mr. Baldwin this morning,' he said, and his voice became episcopal. 'Orders are slackening, I'm afraid, rather than in-

creasing.' He paused, folding his hands. 'Our future,' he went on, 'depends upon so many factors.' The last word seemed to combine mystery with authority. I felt it touched profundities; indicated a summary, perhaps, of economic and financial investigation which Mr. Kenwick had brought to bear carefully upon United Copper; surely covered *communiqués* of recent strategy and portent which had passed between the president and Mr. Kenwick, in the divine visitation described just now as 'running across Mr. Baldwin.'

'Are there many of our old friends waiting for us this morning?' he asked, relaxing in his chair and coming down, so to speak, to the casual and mortal.

'Yes, a good many,' I answered. 'I wish the devil we could give a job to that Italian Benevento who comes with his wife. They look starved.' I talked for a little while about Benevento.

'I know,' he said, interrupting me and losing his composure. 'I hate to go out to them.' His eyes moved about in his head. 'It's too bad,' he said, 'too bad.' These flat words had no hollowness as he spoke them. They were trembling and weak, but not empty. Too sincerely filled up for comfort, as I heard them. There was human pity and human fear in his throat. The two are close. His eyes moved about in his head, searching for a barrier against the

undisciplined ideas that were invading him. At length he found it.

'This is the time when a savings bank account comes in handy,' he said.

His face altered, and his hand went up to his chin, as part of the process of his changed thought. A wholly new set of concepts marshaling behind his eyes gave to them an intellectual gaze. He got up out of his chair and went to a shelf at the far end of the room, taking down from it a loose drawer that had come from a wooden cabinet. He shook the cards in it into an even bank at one end; they had been every which way before. I watched him as he came back to me. I meditated. I thought of him as a type and symbol and then abruptly as a man. 'When he was made,' I mused, 'the tall trunk came first, and the two short arms were stuck on afterward; finally somebody put on the leg props.' When he walked, he dipped at the knee. The possession of that card-index file box changed his personality, and the advertisement of it, his face. Lines of shrewd judgment collected at the corners of his eyes, and a smile came over his lips. When he was seated again, he bent an attentive gaze on the file box, fingering the cards with affectionate precision. I felt curious and a little repulsed, as I watched his fingers. Suddenly he stopped his flicking of cards, and let his hands lie limply over the box and the desk. He looked up at me smiling.

'There is a world of art,' he said, 'in files and indices. Colored slips are of the greatest usefulness,' he added.

In a pause which was filled like the last with a smile, I felt a friendliness creeping into my mind for Mr. Kenwick. I began to speculate with some heat upon the use of variegated carbons.

He looked down at his desk again, pushing aside the wooden drawer of index cards.

'Burnham,' said he, 'I want you to go down into the South End and find me this man. His name is Alfred Budenich,' he pronounced, reading carefully from a blue card. 'An excellent power-house fireman, laid off for six months. We need him back.'

As I left Mr. Kenwick, I became aware that some one had entered the outer office. It was neither the electrician, nor Cordovan, as I half expected. It was Haviland. With a new American coat and the same French cane.

'I have just seen a Wop,' he said excitedly, 'whom I must have. A thin half-Americanized Roman ——'

'What in hell are you talking about?' I said, shaking him violently by the hand.

He returned the shake, smiling delightedly, and going right on with his idea.

'The Romantic Vulgarian,' he said, 'my play. This fellow will do. You must have seen

him — a fine peasant fellow corrupted a little by America ——'

'Benevento ——'

'Olga wants you to come to lunch,' he interrupted, 'at the Bowington Inn.'

'I shall be delighted,' I said, 'but where in God's name ——'

'We're motoring through,' he returned with a Haviland smile. 'No one else, so far as I know, has taken a honeymoon in a copper valley. Americans ——'

'Beyond Bowington, it's damn pretty,' I said.

We talked for a few minutes, and I promised to come early at twelve. I would have to be back by two, I said.

'Will there be a revolution?' he asked, finally, with a sweeping gesture toward the streetful of jobless hunkies outside the door.

'There is one already,' I said, getting an idea from the infectious explosions of Haviland, 'but it's not Russian or French, it's a stagnant, American revolution ——'

'Tell me more about that at lunch,' he said; 'I'm meeting Olga at eleven.'

I was mildly stirred by the prospect of hunting out Alfred Budenich, which I undertook to do before lunch. It would be fun, I thought, digging him up

and giving him back his job. The address was 52 Vernon Avenue, an aristocratic memory, soiled and looted for a quarter-century by successive invasions, Irish and Italian and more lately Polish and Russian.

Moving through the decayed grandeur of Vernon Avenue I came at last to No. 52 and picked my way among wiggling infants, who blocked the flagstone walk. The house had once been a colonial mansion. To-day, it looked like a handsome old gentleman, disfigured by scrofula. Dark rain stains had streaked its two cheeks as though it wept bitterly for its lost youth. In one of the broken windows a yellow flower pot was forced, and lacunæ around the pot held socks and a green slipper.

Entering the open door I climbed a broad, curving staircase from which the carpet thirty years ago had been removed. I tried to read the initials carved on the bannisters and into the panels beside the stairs. When the names were written out, they were Slavic. The defects of the architect's design for the needs of many tenants became immediately apparent on reaching the second floor. A cooking stove and a bed had been installed in the wide front hall, and a web of 'beaver board' partitions was visible in the long corridor, opaque, to be sure, but porous to cooking smells and tumult.

At the top of winding stairs I knocked at a double door. In a minute or two, Madam Budenich ap-

peared, massive, neat, and very respectable. She told me that her husband would be back in two minutes. For an instant, she looked at me, shyly, debating in her head a point of etiquette, I think. I told her that I would wait in the corridor.

Hardly had Madam Budenich closed the door softly and respectfully, I thought, when a deep-throated male yell cut across the cooking noises and baby cries of the house, swallowed them all in a gulf of intensity for an instant of time. They sounded through again, but so did the full-throated male voice, this time with another arguing and protesting voice as adversary. They sounded precisely in the kitchen of the Budenichs; but an instant later, when a violent trampling began, with no voices, I knew they were not. I was tense, and crept slowly along the wall toward the sound of the trampling. Finally, a small crash followed that meant possibly the crumbling of a table and glasses.

With increasing excitement I listened to the shocks of war. At the end of a brief period — the battle had been growing more violent and less vocal — the door of the second apartment beyond the Budenichs' snapped open and dropped a muddle of human limbs into the hall. This projectile was followed by a gaunt arm and hand, which trembled for an instant around the doorknob and then brought the door to with a rush.

The limbs on the floor of the front hall assembled themselves into a man — a tall and amazingly thin one — with the greatest rapidity. The creature shook his head and shoulders as if he shook his brains and senses into place. He got himself together; bent his quivering shoulders forward and stretched his arms, with his fingers taut for clutching. It was as if his enemy had been on the floor in front of him. I moved along the wall so that I could stare better. The eyes of the man were goggled now — half out of his blunt head — his mouth and teeth torn into a bleak grin, and I couldn't help noticing his hair which, coming straight forward like a shingled roof over his eyes, ended in a point an actual inch or two from his face. I was surprised to discover that those violent features had in them a hint of familiarity. The man made a rush at the door, seizing the knob and throwing a shoulder against its central part. The boards vibrated and complained, and I said in a whisper, 'Will it crack?' I looked at his face, listened for wood splintering, and then suddenly I noticed a leg. Six inches of the one with the lifted knee showed white; and in the half-light of the hall it looked as thin as a bottle neck.

Suddenly, from somewhere in the building — and not from the barred room — came a sharp groan. The man at the door became immobile in a second, ceasing to batter the door which had showed signs of

yielding; clinging to it with his body. The groan was repeated. The legs and taut arms, shoulders and neck of the man fell limp. A current of energy was cut off. He moved away from the door, on tiptoe. Then I looked up at his face to see if it would tell me anything. It did. His mouth was distorted, and his eyes gave me an appalling expression of pain before they were shut tight. He was listening for the next groan.

When it came a third time, it issued clearly from the door opposite. And it was clear, too, it came out of the throat of a woman. I suppose the man with the gaunt arms, now quite silent behind his locked door, had half murdered this fellow's wife. I pieced the thing together in considerable horror. The next thing — he will go in to her now, and she will be lying there strangled, I dare say, or mutilated with a knife ——

But the man with the shingled hair had drawn himself up, and was walking eagerly and steadily toward the staircase. The groans increased in frequency and pitch till they merged in a steady moan. They seemed to drive on the hastening steps of the man on the staircase. He clattered down in a passion, taking the last half two at a time.

Alfred Budenich, tall and deliberate, passed him on the stairs, and when he reached the top, both of us watched the fugitive through the front hall win-

dow, picking his steps hastily and nervously among the babies on the flagstones. When he reached the street walk, he slipped on some pebbles, first with one foot, and then, after recovering, with the other. He never fell, but kept his balance by hopping violently on the slipping foot, flapping his arms at the same time like the wings of a chicken. In this way I watched him fade from sight along Vernon Avenue.

It was an interview of not over a minute that I had with Alfred Budenich. He was tall, and looked like a comely, well-built Cossack. He had lines of discipline in his face, and just permitted a tiny disciplined smile of self-satisfaction when I told him he could be a fireman again. I turned to go down the musty stairs.

'Who was the man who just left?' I asked, listening for the groans; they had for a minute or two stopped altogether.

'Rakhofsky,' said Budenich, 'hooker.'

I breathed quickly with a sudden vision of the hot rolls and the machine-like industry of the Russian.

'Do you know what the row is?' I began.

'His wife is having a baby,' returned the Cossack. 'He has gone out to find a doctor.'

I pondered this in an emotional silence.

'Why was he fighting a long-armed fellow over there?' I inquired, pointing at the battered door.

Budenich looked at me, a trace of surprise flickering over his even features above their basic mould of indifference. 'I don't know,' he said, 'I don't know at all. Perhaps he was borrowing money,' he added as an afterthought, nodding respectfully, and slowly opening the door into Madam Budenich's kitchen.

The luncheon with Olga and Austin began oddly enough very gravely. It was as if Haviland had set off all of his explosives in the morning. He insisted on telling us the plans for his house, and his ideas on the relation between business, marriage and symbolism; these latter he took so earnestly that their intrinsic extravagance was hopelessly and regrettably lost. But at last Olga, with admirable and undefeated gayety, maneuvered him into a grand violence. He beat the table and hooked new idea after new idea out of the air with his gesturing fingers. All of them were Austinese, especially his plan for turning Europe into a colony for America. By reversing the historical status, he explained, a spiritual change would overtake the continents. Among falling fragments of information, he threw out that he was going to spend at least ten years making money before turning his whole energy and his total fortune to the service of the dramatic renaissance.

Only once was I a little annoyed. It was while

Olga was speaking, giving the story of a trip to Paestum — to the Greek temples, lunch in the rain, sunset, funny guide, sharp temple lines against the sky, told with all of her magic of recapture. He watched her with a vague, kind smile, vaguer and less kind than one gives to a speaking child, while behind his eyes his boisterous spirit went uninterruptedly in search of its own ego.

When we rose from lunch, Haviland left us to see a friend of his uncle, whom he was pledged to visit, and Olga and I walked back toward the mill. There was still a half hour to 2.00 o'clock so that we started to climb the hill back of the armory which overlooks the river and the black coil of mills on its bank.

I had disciplined my spirit to enjoy every minute of the luncheon. It was different now. My love for Olga had been buried so deep and safely that I had absorbed all of Austin's egoism and Olga's charm with detachment and no emotion. Now mounting the elm-shaded street past the armory, I felt sensitized, as I had a thousand times before in Olga's presence, to pain and ecstasy.

She talked easily of the wedding and of Austin, mentioning two or three presents, the behavior of aunts, and Haviland's unprecedented dignity, at which she laughed. The most Austinese episode was the 'second wedding' which he arranged for late arrivals. The ceremony included the bride's pro-

mise to shoot him if he called her 'mother,' and his promise to accept her as his sole support on the death of Mrs. Bannard.

We walked out at last from the shade trees into an open field which gave a fair view of the Bowington valley. It was a twenty-minute climb, but we had forgotten ——

The linked chain of mills lay close to the right bank, while on the far side running up the valley slopes were a mile of Bowington tenements. When they reached the bank a few staggered into the water on stilts, except at the portions of the bank which were active as dumps.

Olga looked at the valley a long time, at the carved hills and at the sooty river animal between them. A cluster of stacks in the north made smoke patterns and punctured some of them with sparks and a slit of flame.

She looked at the mills and then at me.

'I hate it,' she said, and put her face in her hands. When she took them away, she looked frightened.

'I'm on my honeymoon!' she cried with a curious sobbing anger, and was silent. She gazed for a long moment at the valley again. 'I hate it,' she repeated with a slow trembling, and wept. I was amazed and shaken.

'Why did you bring me here?' she cried in weak

anguish at which my heart leaped. 'I love Austin!' she cried, beginning to tremble and I kissed her.

When she raised the lashes of her eyes, they were beaded wet, and under them I saw what I had guessed distantly in the crossing of glances, but never known.

When our arms slackened and fell, I looked into the valley again. 'Her marriage,' I thought — but the shriek of the mill whistle came up to us out of the valley and out of a forgotten world. She looked at me startled. 'You are due there now?' she said — 'we are having dinner in New York.'

I took hold of her shoulders.

The whistle blew again and she trembled violently. I made her look at me.

'We are both late,' she said.

I felt happy as I walked down the hill. Then as I left, I knew that I had just won her in those minutes and forever given her up.

CHAPTER XII

FIRE OUT OF THE EARTH

Mr. Kenwick was excessively nervous and distrait the next morning. He told me that Mr. Baldwin, whom he had just passed on the street, looked grave, so grave that Mr. Kenwick had lacked courage to speak to him. Though I tried to smile at my chief, whose face, as Miss Kibbe had said, was chickenish, I found myself apprehensive. Several applicants for work that morning had said to me quietly but sternly: 'This can't go on,' and I had agreed with them irrationally with all my might.

At twenty minutes past ten, the outer door of the employment office opened, and a hunky walked through it nervously and briskly. It was Rakhofsky. He was visibly awed by the official and refined atmosphere that our rail, our green cabinet, our Miss Kibbe at her typewriter, diffused to the outsider. He knew to his finger ends that he had come up from the mill to the 'office.' And this made all the more impressive his brusque and decided step across the open floor to my desk, his bold leaning over toward my face, with his chin raised, his immediate, and, for a hunky, unprecedented eruption into speech.

'I wanta see'n' spik Mr. Kentick right away,' he said, taking off his cap.

And keeping it between two fingers, he put the rest of them over the rail, and in that way drew himself close to me and seemed at the same time to gain moral support for his unprecedented strategic position. I noticed again how the hair on his head came forward into a projecting shingle. His overcoat, held in front by two buttons, was an army O.D., faded, and too long. Ludicrously, beneath it, short trousers revealed sockless ankles, thin as the legs of a stork.

'Mr. Kenwick is busy,' I answered him. 'Can I do something for you?'

'I come see Mr. Kentick,' he repeated, with sullen emphasis, gripping still tighter the rail of the pen, and for a whole minute glared at me, with singular ferocity.

'He will be here in a few minutes,' I said. 'What's the matter?'

He waited again, amazed at such a question. 'I have three children,' he said at last, shrugging his shoulders. 'They no eat.'

'How long have you been out of work?' I asked, beginning a formula.

'I come see Mr. Kentick,' he returned, showing his teeth a little in a manner I remembered unpleasantly.

That gentleman, working over his new card files, was unable to resist this insistent appeal to his authority. He emerged slowly.

'My name is Kenwick,' he said, 'not Kentick.'

Rakhofsky stared.

'I go see Jake Halsey,' he began at last, 'and he say you go see Mr. Kentick, employment office, for explain.'

Mr. Kenwick nodded his head. Up to this point it was hardly clear whether Rakhofsky was seeking or offering 'explanation.' But he plunged on.

I listened with an odd breathlessness. Of all men who had submitted themselves to the discipline of machines, this man it seemed to me had succeeded best, his human frailties spoiling least the quality of his service in making copper or the perfection of his loyalty. To discover that he lived for other ends than his daily maneuver with grooves and hot metal was a shock. He had had children. It was conceivable, probable, that at one time, Rakhofsky the hooker, who held the hooker's record in Halsey's mill, had been in love.

For a long time his talk flowed into a perfect narrative of life and disaster; all its points very simple, full of meaning and of the first importance to the whole. Then at moments the tale grew confused, or passed into the Russian language, or became inarticulate or was mixed with hysteria. He often re-

peated in an animal screech, 'You want to kill me, eh?' and began beating his arms and literally expelling foam from his mouth.

Twelve years before he had come over from Russia — from Novorossiisk — to which place precisely he planned to return. To a certain farm in Novorossiisk, as near as I could piece out, to certain acres of soil, to certain cattle, certain pigs. He would buy the adjacent farm as well, and live at ease as a 'landowner.' He had come to America twelve years ago, and two years after moved to Bowington. His first job had been under Halsey, as hooker on the hot rolls. 'I work hooker ten years,' he said, and as he spoke I thought of the copper snakes by the hot rolls that thrash among men's legs, and finally submit to hooks and grooves, till they cool into sullen red and die near the mill door. Five years later he had met his Russian wife in Bowington and married her. There were two babies. The whole of that ten years he had lived in the same house, in the same room, in fact. And he had saved one thousand dollars. There was a simple and orderly architecture to the Rakhofsky epic that was astonishing. All the stones were necessary and in their places. In another ten years, he had figured, his fortune would be made. He would return to Novorossiisk.

But then — it was eleven months ago — came unemployment; he had been laid off by his foreman,

Jake Halsey, whom he had reverenced, feared, and trusted utterly to see him back to Russia. At this point he fell into hysteria again, and developed a personal attack on Kenwick. He screamed: 'Kentick' as a kind of snarl, and yelled: 'My wife — why you want kill?'

Mr. Kenwick had listened to most of the narrative with indifference. After all, when I think back upon it, it was like a thousand and one we had both heard from the 'unemployed' over the railing of the pen. A type hunky tale! But I was trembling with anxiety. I had seen Rakhofsky in that scrofulous house on Vernon Avenue. When he shouted, 'Kentick! Why you want kill my wife!' Mr. Kenwick was no more interested, I believe, but he was annoyed and afraid, and incited to nervousness. He tried definitely not to listen, and went to Miss Kibbe's assistance, who was digging out Rakhofsky's record in the green wall of knowledge.

'I starve for a long time,' the Russian went on between his teeth. 'Then I spend my money, then I starve.' Mr. Kenwick turned from Miss Kibbe and glanced over his shoulder at Rakhofsky.

'Little bit at a time, I take him all,' he said between bitter defiance and a sob. He put his hand into the inner pocket of his buttonless coat, and, fumbling for minutes, took out a bank book, handing it explosively to Mr. Kenwick.

The latter's face mellowed from frightened annoyance, from a kind of disgusted cringe into the intelligence of understanding, and that authentic charity which Saint Paul gives as the first of virtues. I stood there watching the bank entries printing themselves — deposits and withdrawals both — upon the tender and invisible surfaces of Mr. Kenwick's soul. Ten years ago Rakhofsky deposited the first five dollars. Last month he withdrew the last twenty-five dollars.

Mr. Kenwick's tongue made a clucking sound, the gentle but insistent trumpet of regret against three pages of withdrawals, when Rakhofsky took the book from his hand and went on with his narrative. His story, his complaint, his burden, or whatever it was, entered a more searing and terrible period. Rakhofsky said that several months ago his wife became ill, and that the Vernon Avenue doctor treated her illness, which was a kind of fever, and she was cured. 'But,' he added, 'I have no money for doctor. I keep my money for food. Doctor say goddamn! "Next time you bring money. If you no bring, I no come."'

Three months later Madam Rakhofsky, lying on the bed from which she had borne her husband two children in the scrofulous colonial house on Vernon Avenue, began to suffer the pangs of a third.

'I tink,' shouted Rakhofsky, leaning over the rail-

ing, his teeth cutting the words before they were out of his throat and hatred brightly shining in his eyes, 'that goddam doctor come all right, this time, for my wife have baby, but I go borrow money, for sure.' He pulled his middle in more closely to the railing with his hands, his eyes, scorching holes in a yellowish white skull, his forehead quite white under the crazy, projecting shag of black hair. 'My friend, Novotny,' he began again, with a gulp, 'live same house, door across over from mine. I ask for money. I ask for money,' he repeated, 'but he no give to me.' He paused for five seconds, and in that interval I saw a flying body pass through a door at the end of a gaunt arm, recover and return with great energy to the attack of a knob and panel — 'my friend Novotny's' refusal to lend his friend money!

'Den I go for goddam doctor,' he said. I saw that, too. The man with the thatched hair, the grooved yellow face, the stork's ankles, quivered for a moment in front of the room where mysteriously the groans from within had ceased, and then at their renewal plunged clattering down the winding stairs, with their delicately fluted banisters, knifed into Slavic initials. 'I run,' said Rakhofsky. He had run and had slipped, comically, in a futile effort at speed. He had teetered on one foot, and I laughed at him till he teetered, at last, out of sight altogether.

'I find doctor,' he cried, raising his fist. 'I say,

"Come. I kill you."' This was elliptic, but quite intelligible. 'He come,' he continued, 'to see my wife dead.' He paused. 'One woman I know with my wife, she have the baby in her arms. The baby alive, wife dead,' he concluded.

'So that was it,' I thought, seeing again Alfred Budenich opening the door of his home and saying, 'I don't know, I don't know at all. Perhaps he was borrowing money.'

Rakhofsky, however, left me but a second for philosophy or memory. He seized Kenwick with both hands and began to shake him, like a puppy or perhaps like a little boy. The fingers of one hand pinched — bit into the fleshy upper part of Mr. Kenwick's left arm, near the shoulder; the fingers of the other sank into his neck back of the ears. Rakhofsky shook him. And Mr. Kenwick was no Novotny. He submitted, gagging and opening his eyes to the widest, feebly waving his stubby arms.

A deep throaty gurgle issued from Rakhofsky's mouth and now and then the words, 'What's the matter, you?'

I sprang forward and put my hand on Rakhofsky's shoulder. Suddenly he dropped the employment manager, as if the thing he was doing disgusted him. And his victim, quivering back against the green cabinet, staggered there for a minute or two, and then twisted its head petulantly like an insulted

child, and said: 'This is unbelievable.' Five seconds later, shaking his head sorrowfully, and in a voice that trembled but had recovered traces of authority, Mr. Kenwick said: 'You must control yourself.' Then suddenly, he went quite close to the rail and to Rakhofsky and said: 'How long have you been out of work?'

The Russian stared at him with that dull, insolent animal stare which he had bestowed, when Mr. Kenwick told him his name was Kenwick, not Kentick. Then he stepped forward, leaned heavily against the rail and seemed to prod with his head into the soul behind Mr. Kenwick's oyster eyes.

'I work now,' he said. 'Hooker for hot rolls.'

Mr. Kenwick's mouth opened in simple and abrupt wonder.

'I work tree days a week, hooker,' he continued, lengthening his body and putting his face closer and closer to Mr. Kenwick's. 'For a whole month like dat.' He paused. 'Paymaster say: "No pay for you, Rakhofsky, pay factorize. No pay for you."' He gurgled and seized Mr. Kenwick again, to shake him with a redoubled malevolence.

But despite the talon fingers, which must have hurt acutely, and despite a horrid snapping of his head in his neck socket, Mr. Kenwick smiled.

Miss Kibbe had given a little scream at this new seizure, and had squeezed herself between the wall

and the end of the cabinet. But to Mr. Kenwick the violence was only superficial.

There was an eager light in his popping eyes, and in a shaky, gagged voice, he cried: 'I will explain!'

Rakhofsky paused and slackened his fingers, though he didn't take them away.

'How long is it since you have paid your rent?' began Kenwick, his voice moving by trembling periods into parental tones.

'Six months,' said Rakhofsky.

'Exactly,' returned Kenwick, his face gaining an inquisitor's light. 'I think I can put the thing in a clear light. The courts invest landlords with the power to collect rent through the pay of their defaulting tenants. That is' — he went over it again, recognizing suddenly a pedagogic need — 'your pay must be given up till your rent is paid. It is forfeit, or factorized.' He smiled at the Russian. Rakhofsky, however, did not attack him. Abruptly and quite noiselessly he flung himself out the office door, and clattered down the steps outside, as if he were leaving behind him forever at the pen rail the ashes of his hopes.

I ran out of the employment office, and as I shot through the door and reached the first step, I could hear the gate of the *pen* click to, and Mr. Kenwick,

who I knew was there just behind, saying in a tone of eagerness: 'All right! All right!'

Rakhofsky's arms were swinging violently in the act of walking and the shoulders hunching a little, as he threw the corresponding hand vigorously forward. Trying to catch up, I thought of him crazily as a professional walker with whom I was doing a race, except that the sole of one of his boots was loose. It dragged on the ground for twenty paces, till he balanced on one leg and angrily tore the sole away. He threw it as far as the sidewalk across the street and walked on in a fury. I began to run, and who in the world, I asked myself, as I watched his back, is he going to kill? Halsey? Kenwick? At least, himself. I thought with amazement of the scene just past, and wondered hard why he hadn't killed Kenwick. Against the strength of those bony fingers, which could have closed the valves of Mr. Kenwick's chickenish neck quite cunningly, against the bloody intention of his eyes, a judicial phrase had silenced him into a state of loathing and frustration. He hadn't dared to lay fingers upon that Kenwick edifice of respectable conviction . . .

'Stop,' I said, getting in front of him and breaking his plunging gate without halting him. 'I want to talk to you, because I want to help you.'

He stopped and trembled in front of me, but not from fear. It was I who was afraid, horribly af-

fected by the slidings of his jaw and the frenzied pupils he flashed at me from a yellowish skull.

I held five dollars up with both hands, and began to speak. 'I want to help you through,' I said.

A sound came out of his throat which was an airy gasp of pain with an oath settling on top of it. He snatched the bill from my hand and leaped away. Out of breath I watched him flying up the street with his hunching shoulders and one soleless boot. Then I turned, walking back in a queer tide of thought, feeling that I hadn't *given* the money away at all, but that it had been stolen from me, after a struggle of violence.

My mind was filled up with Rakhofsky, expanded and alive with him. The open airy, frank porches of it that seemed to me as I thought about it, right back of my eyes, the lofty arches and far corridors that were infinite. The world was filled up to its confines by Rakhofsky and by his dead wife 'killed' by Mr. Kenwick, by the U.C.C. and by the doctor. I followed him in my mind — with the army overcoat and safety pin — he was running on pipe-like ankles. I followed him to his tenement room. I entered into his body when he stood over the body of his wife and cried with an inarticulate hysteria, becoming all eyes of black fire in a yellow mesh that was no longer a head. I heard his voice when he put the woman's death upon Mr. Kenwick, the chicken-dignified man,

upon the goddam doctor, upon the U.C.C., upon God.

I began to wonder if the Revolution hadn't moved by a mysterious and implacable chemistry from a pool of stagnation into a Russian typhoon. Perhaps the listless and corroded bodies of the men in the garage had by now ripened into revolutionists and would begin their cleansing destruction. They would begin it, without doubt, upon Mr. Kenwick, Miss Kibbe and me.

Walking swiftly back to the office, I felt the dim burden of my mill years rise from my brain and body. I gazed at them in amazement. It seemed to me they had long shown me reality and numbed my power of knowing it. Now my curiosity was alive and bleeding again in a fashion it had not been since Drinker and Bolkonsky. Perhaps because my love was gone, that love which had at once corroded the singleness of my heart, and denied me refreshment. Now suddenly in the lives of these two, Rakhofsky, the hooker, and Kenwick, chicken-faced official, I seemed to be following the raw impulse of our world. Whatever happened for them or me I felt I would go on following it with minute and painful compassion.

I reached the door of the employment office and glanced, as I had a thousand and one times, at the benches, weather gray across the road.

There upon them, startling and reassuring, were the unemployed; a tall Greek stretching indefinite legs before him, with his head lolling against a maple tree that grew beside the best bench. And Benevento on the other end of it, sitting up straight to light a cigarette.

I mounted the four steps to the office door. Back of the pen, Mr. Kenwick will be standing, I said to myself, in dignity, and just in front of the green cabinet of names. A scene that would be impossible to forget — with Miss Kibbe in the wings, taking the protection of her typewriter! He will be there still, I thought, moving his fingers over his chin, and adjusting personal authority to the fear of a violent death.

When I opened the door, I stared straight at the mounting tier of the file cabinet — vast, green, reassuring, and clerical. Miss Kibbe bent over her typewriter making an erasure, and except for that, the room was a chamber of silence; Mr. Kenwick with his dignity and his emotions had disappeared.

I decided that, of course, he was in the inner office; that I would tell him how my five dollars was 'stolen'; that I would ask him how he felt, and suggest coffee and a plan for feeding the destitute children of Rakhofsky. I walked through the open door of the inner office.

At either end of the square table that blocked

rather than occupied the center of the sanctum stood Mr. Kenwick and Mr. Ludwig, the paymaster. Between them on the table was a drawer of wage and employment data and floating over the table itself in rank profusion, paper slips red, yellow, and blue.

They gave me an instant surge of friendliness for Mr. Kenwick, and brought memories of a gentle, pedagoguish man who held speculative ideas upon cross reference and the statistical inadequacy of women. My eye moved up from the exotic deluge of wage slips, coloring the table top to the pate of Mr. Kenwick. He stood tight against the end of the table with his fingers hooked into the end of the wage drawer, and his expression entirely as usual. Skin was gray-yellow as usual, not paler, his eyes green-cool, and invincibly clerical. Then I looked at his opponent. Mr. Ludwig was a Prussian sub-official, plus American breeze and ready to trample under large German feet the employment manager. He stood opposite squarely, threatening Mr. Kenwick with a scarlet face. Like so many fat men he used his paunch in conversation, every now and then lifting it slightly with his hands and lungs. An abdominal gesture signifying importance. He did it now, and also pressed three fingers of each hand, sponge-like on the table. They creased incredibly at the third joint.

'I have orders,' he said in tones that imitated

Tarleton's, 'to sweep all this together and put it in my office. All records of any account, in my office — orders, Kenwick. Any hiring to be done, do it there — won't be any.'

I studied Mr. Kenwick. He continued indelibly clerical save that his head vibrated back and forth a little on his thin neck. It suggested that his firm words might be a moral victory. He said:

'These colored slips must be composed first, and arranged.'

Mr. Ludwig squashed his fingers up and down impatiently at the other end of the table. 'Don't know anything about that,' he said through a thick trench of phlegm. 'Where in hell are my wage cards? Had 'em a month now, Kenwick. Ford truck outside to move everything. I will have to take that cabinet in the front office, I suppose.'

Green cabinet of destiny to go marching! Twenty-eight thousand dead characters and five thousand live ones in a Ford truck. Avanti!

Still Mr. Kenwick's character remained! Marble, by the Lord God, with whiskers. One thing only, he closed his thumb and four fingers over the end of the wage drawer so tight that the blood left the nail.

I looked from one face to the other, from scarlet convex Mr. Ludwig to yellow concave Kenwick. The paymaster, Bowington branch, United Copper Company of America, the employment manager, Baptist

preacher emeritus. They stood surrounded by a good deal of statistical machinery, records in serried boxes, evidences in wood, metal and paper of conscientious exactitude. I glanced at Kenwick's desk top. It was arranged eternally. A ruler on the left, centimeters and inches, daily reminder center, paper weight of brass moulding right rear. But as I turned back to the U.C.C. officials, bending over the wage box, I seemed to see them naked. Not that I did, but well I seemed to feel them naked. Both pale with fright and yet wondering intensely about murder. In a boat, leaky with one oar, on a blank, blazing sea, a wet desert, bending over a jug of fresh drink and a can of sea biscuit. That was my vision. Perhaps my imagination was over-ripe on the day's events, but anyhow looking at the officials in the boat Rakhofsky's troubles tapered away.

'We are in the midst of this work,' said Mr. Kenwick, sweeping the back of his hand over the table top, 'and it will be necessary to arrange your cards. By to-morrow morning ——'

'That's it, Kenwick. Tire him,' I whispered to myself. 'He's not as strong as he looks.'

'Your office,' said the other, 'is a mess. One office big enough anyway for everything, as I told Tarleton. There's the written order' — it fluttered down on the wage spectrum. 'And, for God's sake, what do you do here all day ——'

I saw the clerical yellow face giving away to sheer paper and then to blood. He looked at the order paper amazedly. Oh, Kenwick, he has heavier knuckles, but don't let him. Act as though you were human! Give him the edge of your tongue, and then walk out to join the skeletons on the bench, Benevento and Rakhofsky ——

Mr. Kenwick drew away from the table, spring-halting for a yard backward. Then he put his white hands together, laced them whiter still, and looked at Ludwig.

'We'll do our best to pack up,' he said. 'An order,' he said, 'is an order and presumably the management knows its business better than we do.'

'All right,' said Mr. Ludwig, and lifting himself out of his relaxed slouch, walked over the threshold into the front office.

On the floor, six feet from Miss Kibbe's desk where it had fallen during the Rakhofsky episode, was one of the colored wage slips. Mr. Ludwig saw it on his conquering passage through the outer office. 'My God! Kenwick,' he gurgled. Phlegm seemed to choke in his throat.

Mr. Kenwick ran after and stood out of breath, his two hands raised, with the white fingers snug and parallel.

'An accident,' he said, puffing, 'you'll find the rest of the slips shipshape.'

Mr. Ludwig paused, and looked down at him, as if from the top of the sheet mill funnel, and Kenwick, gaining his breath, reached for the soiled slip.

'I apologize,' he said.

In my room at Mrs. Rolfe's I thought about the employment manager, his clerical face, his colored slips . . . and Rakhofsky's eyes, with the human and animal pain in them . . . I felt wonderfully concerned for the strength of their spirits as though the world, war-buffeted and mechanized, hung trembling on the victory of each over circumstance. Indeed I was certain, not knowing why, that my own fate as citizen of a mechanic world — and Kenwick's clerk — was twisted into theirs: my mind's fate, my job's, the peace of my soul.

CHAPTER XIII

DIRTY REED'S APOCALYPSE

At eight the next morning I went to the office. The decayed benches across the street were filled with staring hunkies, but Mr. Kenwick's kingdom was locked. I made my way to Ludwig's office. Inside were twenty-eight desks, a big one with twenty-seven satellites. Fifteen had typewriters. A clerk rose from one of the desks at a great distance and started down the long aisle. It was Mr. Kenwick. It seemed to me he was walking spectral-bodied out of the green cabinet of the dead, and I found myself comparing his face with the slackened countenances in the garage — to their advantage. He should have jointed Benevento, I thought.

Then he shook hands. 'You are to report to Mr. Halsey,' he said.

The scarlet, convex face of Mr. Ludwig appeared above the ranks of typewriters. Mr. Kenwick shook my hand, his eyes watering unpleasantly. 'Mutual obligations, mutual sacrifices,' he said.

Somewhat hastily he began his journey back to desk 14, and I went out feeling myself suffocated by the office air, by disgust, and by a tendency to tears. 'Victory,' I said aloud.

I arrived at the rolling mill at about eight-thirty and Halsey gave me at once the hunky job of coil piling which had been mine on that angry day of Haviland's visit. I found myself sweating freely, not because the coils were hot, but because my muscles had softened in Mr. Kenwick's office. After a half-hour's work I looked idly across at the hot rolls, leaning on my tongs. A few feet from the last pair stood Rakhofsky staring at them. He wore no overalls, but the same curious costume in which he had entered our office yesterday. 'He isn't here to work,' I thought, 'but to stare his melancholy fill at those spinning grooves before he leaves them forever.' I saw that his features had the same intentness without expression that they had worn in service. 'Unquestionably,' I thought, 'he is reviewing his ten years' labor in that spot — a hooker's record.' As I mused, he started running toward the shafts and belt at the end of the rolls. Probably because of a lively memory and image of Drinker's death, I thought with quick horror of his putting his head between them.

But he stopped three or four feet from the moving shaft. There were hot bars piled between him and the belt, and he stood quivering before them with his arms raised and tense. Was he whipping up his nerve? Whatever intention he had, he gave it up in a few seconds, and moved off hastily. I walked

round the hot rolls, tracking him, but he had gone.

When I returned to the coil piling, I wondered if my imagination had invented the intention of that *macabre* death. I looked over again at the shaft — the machinery offered a perfectly efficient guillotine. Execution was certain — with all resulting unpleasantness — the Company's inheritance.

I turned to tell the man beside me what had happened, or what hadn't, but at the instant, a hunky brushed my sleeve. It was Rakhofsky, walking slowly but with marvelous intentness toward a companion shaft at the other end, my end, of the hot rolls. I glanced at the belt. There were no hot bars there blocking any one's convenient path to extinction. This time I had no doubts, and I tripped up the Russian. He stumbled, but he clutched my knees violently and in a second began to climb me like a ladder. 'I kill you first,' he stated, reaching my neck and shaking it as he had done Kenwick's only yesterday. Dirty Reed, thank God, blunted that malevolent intention. He struck Rakhofsky slowly but carefully behind his ear.

The struggle which kindled between Dirty and the Russian was brief, but it was witnessed throughout by Halsey, who had been inspecting hot metal at the furnaces. When the Russian prepared a third lunge, the foreman intervened. Rakhofsky desisted in-

stantly, and gazed at the floor with a face of deep shame.

'Now get out of my mill!' said Halsey in a voice of such weakness it could hardly hold its necessary load of rage and authority. 'Don't come back, Reed,' he said, 'I'll —— ' he thought over the alternatives amid hiccoughs.

Dirty drew himself up and addressed the rolling mill. 'Mr. Halsey,' he began, 'is losing his two best men.' He put his arms round the Russian's shoulders. 'Brothers in toil,' he said, 'and misfortune. Not only that,' he continued, looking around him, 'he is losing the two most handsome. Shake on that, Russky!' He snatched the limp fingers of the bewildered hunky and wrung them violently.

Halsey tried to interrupt, but his anger paralyzed.

'Don't lather yourself,' said Dirty pleasantly. 'I'll stay away all summer.'

Halsey out of his impotence would have fired, I think, every one of the listening circle, but that fortunate *deus ex machina*, his belly, intervened. Words choked in his mouth, and he staggered toward the tin retreat with both hands pressing his dyspeptic middle. Halfway there he sank weakly to the floor and Dirty and I in the presence of an awed mill picked him up. Dirty carried his head and I his feet. As we entered the tin office, he drew up one of his legs in a spasm and shot it out quickly, so that the

heel ground unpleasantly into my ribs. Immediately after, he recovered a little and lifted his head.

'You had better go along with Reed,' he said, looking at me with his sullen intensity. 'I don't like your goddam mouth.'

'We're just lucky,' I said to Dirty as we went through the green gate of the mill. 'New jobs,' he returned, 'new bosses, new wimmen — a luvly education for you.'

We agreed to take the five-ten train together. Then, leaving him, I climbed the hill that overlooks the Bowington valley and the mill. I came out into an open field and gazed down, as Olga and I had done, on the black mills by the river. Then I lay down on the rich grass.

Every blade of it had a platoon of insects which invaded my ears with nodes of mild thunder. The moan of the electric crane at the foundry came up to me out of the valley. It was curious how full and moving I felt the life inside me. Like an even river, I had a sense of knowing something through the whole of my body, not one part only, not my brain.

After a while I started remembering. I remembered a cathedral I had once built in my mind, while swabbing metal on Bill's rolls. It had a great lantern tower like one I had seen somewhere in Europe as a kid, a rose window, stations of the cross, carved choir stalls with ghouls on the underseats, a

holy zeal in carved virgins — intellect and passion into stone! The rolling mill was low-ceiled and a mess, but the hunkies and the men from Brum had made the place thick and heavy with their bodies and their wills. The tools were shiny, the floor under the rolls worn, the shafts ground away. It was here their spirits had gone forth in boredom, their muscles and wills moved, and their minds kneaded into copper and into the passing of time.

Funny worshipers. Burton going out on a stretcher of four hands with his eye cut. Bill juggling the spanners and talking alchemy, Halsey drunk and resolute, heading the hierarchy from his tipped chair in the tin office. And Kreck and Burton, by the black stanchions, majestic and fussy, working their deep passions into dynamo copper. Rakhofsky the mysterious acolyte of the hot rolls performed methodically his violent ritual. No man could forget Clark the Duke of Brum, twirling with disdain a micrometer on his right thumb. A great deal of incense was sweeping up through the aisles from the drying-out tubs near the hot rolls. Through it, Dirty Reed — with his red face and carbuncle — casual, independent, and blasphemous, came down the aisle of the rolls.

I bought my railway ticket and went out on the platform.

'Look at 'em!' said Dirty, meeting me at the station door. A dozen hunkies sat on rusty rails by the freight house, where they had taken to loafing — since the 'pen' closed — to watch trains, and to steal into freight cars. There were always rumors, telling of 'luck' a few stations down the line or over in the next valley.

I forced up the window in the smoking-car and stuck my head out, as the train started, to see, by God, Benevento! Benevento! He saw me and got up from the end of his rail, upsetting the whole tier, and bringing down the hunkies. That stiff-armed Roman salute he gave me and then yelled something as the train went by. I couldn't hear it because of a broken truck in my car. I could hear only a faint yelling and see the flash of his teeth. For a few minutes, there was nothing in my head but the defective truck jolting on steel, and then the whole rolling mill was there. It occurred to me quickly that the mill would be with me forever and that terrified and comforted me a good deal. The rolls are turning everlastingly, I thought. The defective truck was still speaking. 'What will they do to you now?' it asked. Dirty Reed interrupted, 'New jobs,' he began, 'new bosses ——'

THE END

$2.50

BREAD AND FIRE

Charles Rumford Walker

'*As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire.*' — *The Book of Job.*

HERE is a novel of contemporary America that gives the surface and the core of the changing epoch following the war. 'Bread and Fire' is the story of a young man's plunge into a world of chaos, his adventures amid the intellectual ferment of New York, and the hard actuality of a mill town, and his experiences in love, in business, and in life.

Half way through the book, Harris Burnham, half student, half adventurer, and wholly American, puts in his own words the immemorial struggle of life in this Machine Age — '*or any other.*' 'A war of attrition with the Earth to get out of it bread. An old war, interrupted now and then by fire, slow or volcanic. . . . There are two kinds of people who do not understand *us* — the respectable people and the bright-eyed Utopian.'

Here is the tale of our world — the mixed, volcanic world that has come out of war, industrialism, radicalism, normalcy, the Kiwanis, jazz, and the machine. The old story of love, curiosity, and youth's passionate adventure has never been told with greater sensitiveness to its new and chaotic setting, with a deeper intensity, or with greater truth.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09874 307 1